

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, March 1, 1899. by Frank Tousey.

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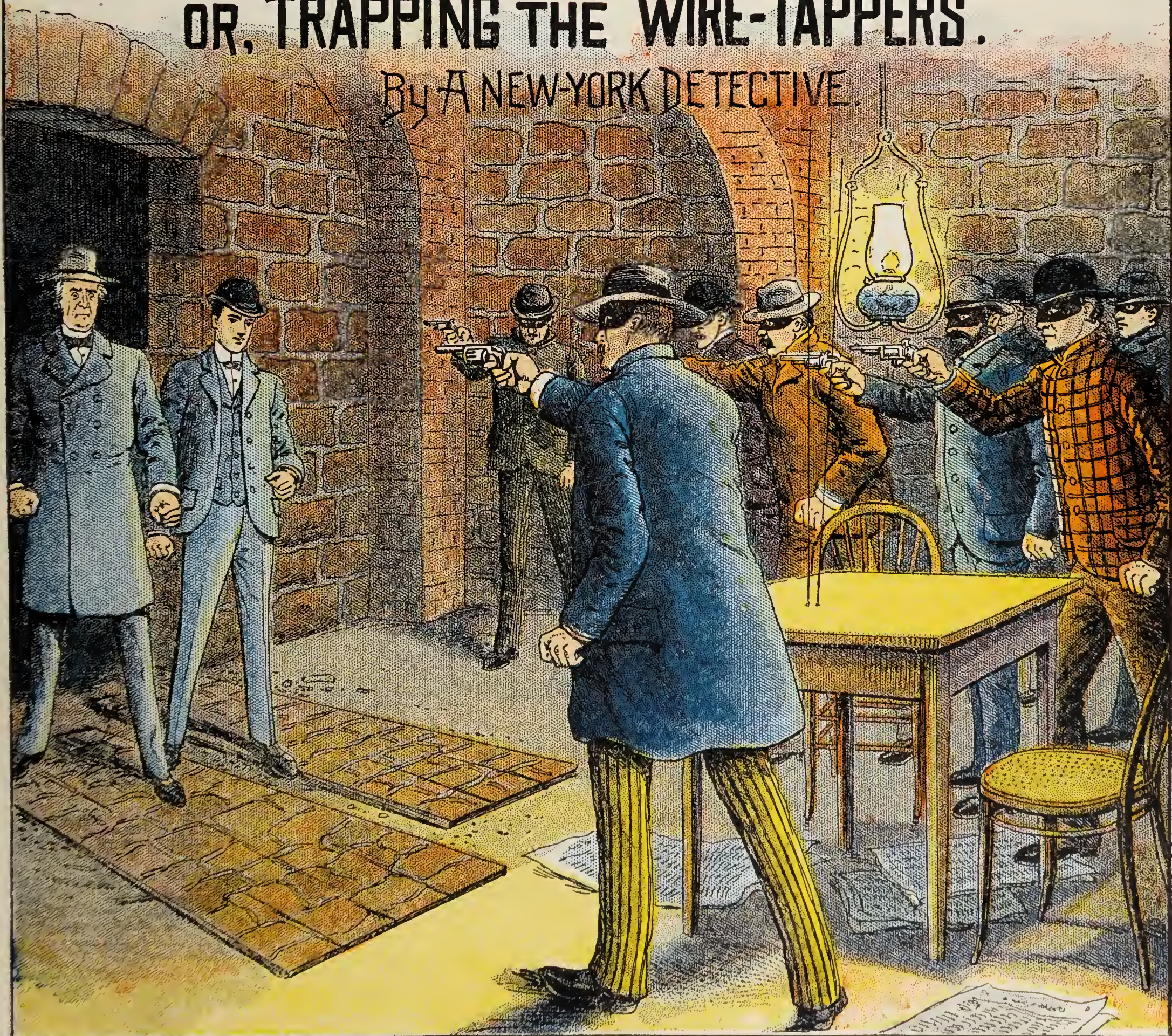
NEW YORK, JANUARY 3, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADY'S IN THE JAWS OF DEATH;

OR, TRAPPING THE WIRE-TAPPERS.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



Standing within this vault were ten masked men. Every one of them were aiming revolvers at the heads of the two detectives and the leader of the gang, whom the officers recognized as the man they traced from Moses Levy's said in cruel tones. "Gentlemen," you are trapped!"

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CHAPTER I.

THE SUICIDE.

One rainy night in April, a tall, heavily built man, enveloped in an ulster and a black slouched hat, might have been seen emerging from a well-known "fence," on Third avenue, New York, holding an umbrella over his head.

The brim of his hat was pulled so far down over his face, and his coat collar was turned so high up around his neck, that very little of his features could have been seen.

In fact, he kept the umbrella so close to his head that anyone passing by him would not have recognized him at all.

There was something so suspicious about the man's action, when he reached the street and hurriedly glanced around, that it attracted the attention of two detectives who were crouching in a neighboring doorway, keeping the pawnshop under surveillance.

One of these detectives was Old King Brady, the famous Secret Service man, and the boy with him was Harry Brady, his pupil and partner.

The former, as our readers know, was a tall, gaunt man, with white hair, smooth-shaven face and keen, deep-set eyes.

He wore a big, white felt hat, an old-fashioned, blue frock coat, tightly buttoned up to the neck, and a standing collar and stock.

The boy was a handsome, fearless youth, attired much like his partner, except that he was more stylish in the cut of his clothing.

Feared by all the crooks of Gotham, having a great af-

fection for each other, although not related, and never failing to succeed in the most difficult cases they undertook, the Bradys were accounted the best detectives on the force.

Having nothing special to do that night, and wishing to keep employed, they had gone up to Harlem to shadow Moses Levy's place, in order to see what crooks were pledging articles there.

If robberies were afterward reported, and the style of work done showed the thefts to have been committed by the crooks seen by the detectives going into the fence, they would know who did the job, and be able to recover the goods.

While watching Levy's place they had seen the big man with the umbrella come skulking along and steal into the fence.

Neither of the detectives recognized him, as he kept his features carefully concealed, and they concluded that if he were a professional crook he must be a new arrival in the city.

When the man emerged into the street Old King Brady nudged his companion and said, in low, warning tones:

"Here he comes, Harry."

"How he is trying to avoid observation!" the boy commented.

"I can't make out yet who he is."

"Nor I. As most of Levy's patrons are grafters, however, we can be pretty sure that this man is not straight. The very fact of his stealing here under cover of the night, and his violent efforts to conceal his movements, stamp him as being dishonest."

"It might be worth our while to shadow him, and find out something about his identity," suggested the old sleuth.

"We have no time to lose, then," replied the boy, "for there he goes around that corner. He is heading toward the East River."

"Put up your umbrella and we will follow him," said Old King Brady, taking a chew of tobacco and turning up the bottoms of his trousers.

A minute later the detectives under one umbrella glided out of the doorway, hurried to the corner, and glanced down the side street.

Over the black, glittering pavement the stranger was hurrying with down-bent head, and as he passed under a street lamp they saw him glance back searchingly, and then go on again.

"He doesn't want anyone to see his movements," Old King Brady remarked, dryly. "Just see how watchful he is. Cross over the street and we will get in the shadow of those houses yonder."

The man ahead, on the opposite side of the street, was striding on swiftly, and the detectives stealthily dogged his footsteps, keeping to the deepest shadows, slinking into doorways when the man looked back, and successfully keeping their movements well concealed.

Not far from Avenue A, there stood an old-fashioned mansion, surrounded by a huge plot of ground overgrown with trees and bushes.

It is no longer in existence, a row of modern flat houses now occupying its site. It was the old Van Velt manor.

For many years the property had been unoccupied, as the family had died out; and the estate was in litigation for the benefit of the distant relatives in other cities.

Neglected, and having the reputation of being haunted, the old house had fallen to decay, and the grounds were overgrown with rank weeds and bushes.

The place had a singularly forbidding aspect.

When the big man reached the broken gate, however, he suddenly passed through into the wild, gloomy garden and vanished.

Hurrying over to the entrance, the detectives saw him stealing up the path through the shrubbery toward the old house.

"What in thunder brings him to this place?" muttered Old King Brady, in tones of amazement. "The old rookery is deserted."

"He has some mysterious purpose in view," the boy answered, "and if we follow him up we may find out what it is."

"There he goes up on the front piazza. He's opening the door and going in. By Jove! this is mighty queer. Follow him."

They hurried over to the house and, reaching the door, they tried to open it, but found that it was locked inside.

Next they made an effort to open the windows, but found that they, too, were firmly secured.

A circuit of the house was next made, and all the other windows and doors tried, with no better success.

"Every opening secured so we can't get in without force,"

said Old King Brady, when they returned to the front of the house.

As they glanced up at the gloomy old building Harry suddenly caught view of a light passing one of the upper windows, and, pointing at it excitedly, the boy whispered:

"There he goes now toward the upper floors."

"I am bound to get into that house, Harry."

"You can do so by climbing up that big cherry tree standing beside the building. See—there's a huge limb extending over the roof. If we get on top of the house we might get in through a scuttle."

"Try it. Are you armed? We may have trouble."

"I've got a pistol and a dark lantern."

"And so have I."

They went over to the big tree, climbed up the wet trunk and, going out on the branch, finally reached the roof.

One quick glance showed them a scuttle and a skylight, the glass panes in which were broken on one side.

Harry made an effort to raise the scuttle, but it was hooked inside and he was not able to lift it an inch.

"Can't do it," he muttered.

"Let's see what we can do with the skylight," said Old King Brady.

They strode over to it and peered down through the broken panes.

Everything was dark and gloomy below.

A line of telegraph wires coming from the street ran to some porcelain insulators fastened to the skylight curb, and the wires passed through into the interior of the building.

The detectives wondered at these wires being there, for the house had, to their knowledge, been deserted so many years that it seemed strange that even dead wires should remain there for such a length of time in disuse.

Just as they peered down through the skylight, there came a sudden, dazzling flash that brilliantly lit up a big apartment below.

It was a huge, bare room, containing a man, who crouched back in a corner, pale and emaciated, his clothing in tatters, his hair unkempt and his face covered with a grizzled beard.

The tall stranger whom the Bradys had been shadowing had unlocked the door and stepped into the room with a lamp in his hand.

A black mask now covered his face, and he stood on the threshold a moment, glaring at his prisoner ferociously.

Finally he stepped into the room, locked the door, set the lamp on the floor and gave a peculiar whistle.

Instantly the barrels of several rifles were thrust through some small, circular openings cut through the three windowless walls of the room, high up from the floor, near the ceiling.

These deadly weapons were pointed toward the wretched prisoner with fiendish precision by the hidden holders outside the room.

A sneering chuckle escaped the masked man, and the prisoner, whose eyes by this time had become accustomed to the

light, stood up, faced the newcomer and cried, in hoarse tones:

"Have you come here again to gloat over my misery?"

The masked man drew a revolver from his pocket, strode over to his victim, and held out the pistol to him, and answered:

"No. I have come to give you the only chance you have to escape from here—that is, by means of the grave. Take this pistol. Blow your brains out."

The prisoner eagerly seized the weapon and aimed it at the masked man.

"I will kill you, you demon!" he shrieked, madly.

"Hold!" cried the other. "You will gain nothing by committing murder. See those gun-barrels in the wall? If you injure me you will get shot to pieces. Don't be a fool. Obey me. Kill yourself!"

A deep groan of anguish escaped the prisoner, and he reeled back.

For a moment he stood pale and panting. Then, in utter desperation he suddenly raised the revolver to his temple and pulled the trigger.

A blinding flash and a loud report followed, and he fell heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER II.

A QUEER DISAPPEARANCE.

The Bradys had witnessed the entire occurrence in the room below, and a thrill of intense horror shot through them when the tragedy happened.

Neither of them expected to see the prisoner deliberately follow the masked man's order to so suddenly commit suicide.

Both detectives had been drawing their own weapons, intending to fire at the masked man, and rescue his prisoner as soon as they could get down into the room below.

The sudden and unexpected termination of the fatal scene instantly changed all their plans, however, and filled them with dismay.

Recoiling from the skylight for an instant, the detectives glanced at each other with astonished expressions, and Harry gasped:

"Well, what do you think of that?"

"Atrocious!" returned Old King Brady.

"The masked man wanted his prisoner dead, but saved himself with devilish cunning from a charge of murder, by forcing his miserable victim to kill himself."

"Technically, the masked man is no murderer; but from a humane point of view he is as much that poor fellow's slayer as if he had shot the man with his own hand."

"As we witnessed the deed," said Harry, "let us get into the house, arrest the masked man, and find out why he kept that man a prisoner here, and why he caused him to commit suicide."

They turned their glances upon the skylight again.

At one look down into the room they saw that the light was gone.

Old King Brady became suspicious of this, and exclaimed:

"You go back to the yard, quick, and guard the front of the house. The masked man and his pals who held those rifles may be escaping. I'll drop down into that room, through the skylight. If I meet with danger I'll discharge my pistol and you come in. Should I hear your revolver I'll know you need me, and I'll go to your aid as quickly as I can."

"Very well," assented the boy, and away he went to the limb of the cherry tree, in order to get down to the ground again.

Old King Brady lit his dark lantern, got his pistol ready for use and pulled the skylight off the curb.

He had seen that the distance down to the floor below was only ten feet, and he hung by his hands from the curb, dropped a distance of about four feet, and landed on the bare boards with a bang.

For an instant he stood silently listening.

Not a sound reached his ears.

Then he pulled his dark lantern from his pocket and flashed its rays around the room, in quest of the masked man.

He had vanished.

The door stood wide open.

All the rifle barrels had disappeared from the holes in the walls, and the old detective turned his light upon the floor.

He wanted to examine the dead man.

But the suicide was gone, too!

The detective was bitterly disappointed.

"That masked fellow must have carried him out of here," he cogitated. "If they are still in the house I'll have them. Should they get out ahead of me Harry will grab them."

Just then a bright, glittering object lying on the floor caught his view, and he picked it up and found it was the revolver with which the suicide had put an end to his life.

It was still warm from the shot.

Old King Brady was struck by the peculiar shape of the pistol.

It was of .32-calibre, nickel-plated, and carried five cartridges, of the centre-fire type, with curious-looking bullets.

The pistol was extremely short-barreled, and the handle was covered with pure ivory, carved on each side with a human skull and cross-bones.

The cartridge bullets had flattened ends with small holes bored in them, and four rings encircling them where they joined the brass shells.

"Expanding bullets," Old King Brady muttered, as he finished his inspection and placed the weapon in his pocket. "I'll keep this. It may prove to be a valuable clew in establishing the identity of the masked villain and his unlucky victim. Now to find them."

He passed through the door into a wide hall.

There were empty rooms on three sides of the one in which the tragedy had taken place, but no one was in them.

A thick layer of dust on the floors of all the rooms showed him that they had been occupied by a number of men, for the imprints of their shoes yet remained stamped there.

Holes had been punched through the walls, up near the cornices, and the old detective viewed them thoughtfully and muttered:

"Made to ventilate the prisoner's room, no doubt. In order to reach them the men with the guns stood on their companions' shoulders. Well, they ain't on this floor."

He thereupon descended the stairs.

As he heard nothing from Harry he concluded that none of the mysterious gang had yet ventured to leave the house.

Reaching the ground floor, the old detective passed through the empty rooms, carefully scrutinizing everything, but failed to see anything of the men he was searching for.

These floors must have been swept, for there was little or no dust upon them to hold the tell-tale foot imprints.

Old King Brady was getting worried.

"Where can they be?" he cogitated. "Surely not in the cellar. But I'll go down there and investigate."

He found the cellar door bolted.

This seemed good evidence that it had not been used.

Nevertheless, he opened it and descended the stairs.

Before him was a huge cellar, with a row of posts running through the centre to support the rafter girders.

The concrete floor was hard and dirty, but contained no marks of unusual character, and there was a small recess in the front wall, covered with an iron grating, for the reception of coal.

But there were no signs of the masked man and his victim.

Old King Brady was puzzled and surprised.

He searched the place as a mere matter of form, and then retraced his steps up-stairs, muttering:

"They ain't down here, either. But where can they be?"

He had closely searched every room, closet and cupboard in the house, from top to bottom, without finding the ones he sought, and at length was forced to admit defeat.

In addition to a general inspection of the rooms and halls he had tried every door and window and found them locked and bolted on the inside. That made the case all the more mysterious.

He concluded that they could not get out without unlocking or unbolting the doors or windows, and argued that they could not have done so and then locked and bolted them after they got out.

Completely puzzled, he went up-stairs.

Unlocking the front door, he met Harry on the piazza.

"Seen them?" he asked the boy, expectantly.

"No. Have you?" Harry replied.

"Not a sign."

"Ain't they in the house?"

"No. And I can't find how they got out."

"Perhaps they are hidden somewhere about the house."

"There isn't a hole or corner that I haven't searched. If they are hidden, their place of concealment is so well disguised as to defy my most careful search to find it."

"What, then, could have become of them?"

"Let us search the grounds for some trace."

With their dark lanterns reflecting on the ground, they went around the house, and, finding nothing there, proceeded to the barn.

Outside the door they paused.

In the muddy ground they saw a number of footprints freshly made, for they were not yet filled with water from the falling rain.

"At last! Here are their tracks!" cried Harry. "See—they lead to the fence on the Avenue A side. Follow them."

"How did they get in the barn?"

"There may be a secret passage from the house. If they crossed the wet ground we would have seen their tracks."

Following the trail to the fence, they got out in the street through a gate. A policeman ran toward them, demanding:

"Say! what wor yez doin' in there?"

"We're detectives, after a gang. Here are our badges," said Harry.

"Oh," said the officer, in satisfied tones. "I see. It's only five minutes ago I'm after chasin' tin min who came from here carryin' wan av thim who seemed ter be ailin'."

"It was a corpse they carried. Where did they go?"

"Over ter ther river. Sure, they got away in a row boat."

"Show us where they went."

The patrolman led them down to the foot of the street. They glanced out on the foggy river, but failed to see anything.

The policeman questioned them about the matter, and they told him what had happened.

He said he had never seen anyone about the grounds of the old mansion before, and declared he would watch in the future.

The Bradys then left him and went down to headquarters, to report the mysterious occurrence to their Chief and get his views on the subject.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT THE WIRE TAPPERS.

"You say you were here to see me last night about eleven o'clock?"

"We were, Chief," answered Old King Brady, as he and Harry sat down in the office at headquarters on the following afternoon. "You had gone home for the night, we were told."

"And what did you want of me?"

"We have just unearthed a curious mystery."

"Indeed! Let me hear the particulars," said the Chief, taking a cigar from his pocket and lighting it.

The Bradys told him all about the happenings of the previous night, and he listened attentively until the story was finished.

He then fell into a deep study.

The Chief was analyzing the whole matter.

Presently he glanced up at the detectives and said:

"It's a very peculiar case."

"Have you formed any theory about it?" queried the old sleuth.

"Certainly I have. But theories are mere guesswork. To solve the mystery properly one must have facts to work on.

"The first point to be ascertained under the circumstances is the identity of the parties concerned in the case. Can you do it?"

"Yes," promptly answered Harry. "I think we may."

"The next fact to be established," continued the Chief, puffing at his cigar, "is the motive for the deed."

"It won't be so easy to do that."

"If you could learn the motive of that crime," said the Chief, "you could very easily find out who the criminals are."

"Well," said Harry, quietly, "if we can't find out who did the job, we will bend all our energies toward discovering why that masked man induced his prisoner to commit suicide. But it is going to be a very hard case, as the clues we have to follow are so meagre that they don't offer much encouragement."

"I never knew of the difficulty of a case frightening either one of you into giving it up," laughed the Chief.

"Oh, if you assign us to unravelling this mystery we will do the job effectively," carelessly answered the young detective.

"I do want you to work it up."

"Very well, sir; it shall be done."

"Have you any idea who the crooks were?"

"None whatever," answered Harry.

"Nor a theory as to why the job was committed?"

"We only know this much: The prisoner was not wanted on earth by the masked man. What that reason was is a mystery. He evidently feared to murder the prisoner, as he doubtless dreaded the consequence of being arrested for such a deed. For that reason he kept his man alive, but drove the poor wretch to a point of such desperation that he lost all interest in life. The prisoner evidently considered his case hopeless. As death was preferable to being held a captive, he chose the lesser of the two evils and committed suicide on the spur of the moment, during a sudden frenzy. Had he remained cool, calm and collected he would not have destroyed himself, except as a last resort against a graver danger."

"Your ideas seem to be quite reasonable."

"We have only got two slim chances to solve this mystery."

"To what do you allude?"

"By applying to Moses Levy, the fence, we may ascertain who the masked man was," replied Harry, "and once we establish his identity we might learn why he held that man a prisoner and drove him to commit suicide."

"And the other chance?"

"To find out where that peculiar pistol came from with which the man killed himself."

"That won't be quite so easy, perhaps."

"No; we don't think it will. The misfortune is that we failed to see the masked man's face, and didn't detect any distinguishing point about his hands, his walk or his voice."

"Consequently he is a sealed mystery to you."

"Exactly," assented the boy.

Just then the headquarters telegraph operator knocked at the door and came in, saying to the Chief:

"Report on the 'phone from the Morgue."

"What is it?"

"Man floater found in the East River, near Hell Gate, with a bullet hole in his right temple."

The Bradys glanced significantly at each other.

Noticing this, the Chief asked the operator:

"When was the body found?"

"To-day, at three o'clock."

"By whom?"

"Paddy McDermott, captain of the tugboat Happy-Go-Lucky."

"Describe the floater."

"Man of fifty. Ragged clothes. Grizzled beard. Long, gray hair. Wore no underwear except socks. Had no collar on his flannel outing shirt. Buttoned shoes, No. 7. No marks on the body. Evidently a person of refinement. Nothing in the way of money, jewelry or papers. The Morgue keeper said he had not been in the water twenty-four hours. Looks like the victim of murder."

"Anything else?"

"No, sir."

"You may go."

The operator closed the door.

When he was gone, the Chief asked Old King Brady:

"Is it the suicide?"

"That description would fit him."

"You had better go to the Morgue and see."

"We shall."

"Evidently the masked man and his pals flung the body overboard when they got out on the river in their boat."

"That's probably what they intended to do when they carried the body from the old manor," answered Harry.

The Chief picked up a paper from his desk and glanced over it.

Finally he laid it down again, and remarked:

"I wish this case had not come up just now."

"Why?" queried the boy, curiously.

"Because I had another job laid out for you."

"What was it?"

"To trap the wire-tappers."

The Bradys' curiosity was aroused by this reply.

"The wire-tappers?" asked Harry.

"Yes. You know what they are, don't you?"

"Of course. They are usually expert telegraph operators and linemen who attach wires to the main lines, run the wires to a telegraph sounder and read the news sent over the line as soon as the operator in the telegraph office gets it."

"That's the definition of a wire-tapper," laughed the Chief, "but as wire-tapping is usually done merely for the sake of profiting by the news thus gleaned it must be borne in mind that only two classes of people usually suffer from wire-tapping. I refer to race-track poolrooms and bankers and brokers."

"Who are the sufferers in this instance, Chief?"

"I've received many complaints from both parties. Of course I don't care a rap how much the poolroom keepers are hit by wire-tapping, but I must pay attention to the complaints of the bankers and brokers, for they are gamblers of a stripe that command the respect of the telegraph companies. The Western Union general manager was here to-day, and demanded our aid to run down a desperate gang of wire-tappers who have been operating on their lines for a long time, and thus have caused the ruination of many firms."

"What is their mode of operations?"

"They seem to be familiar with the stock news that goes over certain wires, and when they tap the wires and get secret information, they have a pal on 'Change who plunges for them, causing them to make heaps of money and forcing some brokers to the verge of bankruptcy. This can be done by securing information in advance, by tapping the wires, as to how certain stocks are going. It's like getting an advance tip on a fixed horse-race."

"I see!" said Harry, nodding.

"This paper on my desk contains a map of the tapped wires I wanted you to watch, and also a list of the firms affected by the abominable practice. But as long as you are going to be occupied with the other case you may as well let this go."

"No, no!" said Old King Brady. "Let us have the list, Chief, and we will see if we can combine the two jobs."

"Very well," assented the Chief, handing it over.

Old King Brady glanced at the map.

Suddenly he started, glanced up and, pointing at an ink spot on the paper, cried, in excited tones:

"See here—on the line at 66th street and Avenue A—it's marked as being tapped there—opposite the old house where the tragedy occurred. Harry—do you recollect the telegraph wires attached to the skylight, which entered the old mansion? I'll bet anything that the wire-tappers and the gang with the masked man are identical!"

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE MORGUE.

An amazed expression flashed across the Chief's usually immobile face when he heard what Old King Brady said to Harry.

"What!" he exclaimed, "do you mean to say that there are telegraph wires running from the trunk line in the street to the roof of the old Van Velt manor, in 66th street?"

"Just so," assented Old King Brady, smilingly, "and we wondered at the time we saw them why they were there."

"You have made an important discovery."

"So it seems, although we were ignorant of it until now."

"I advise you to examine deeper into that point."

"We intend to."

"If, as you suspect, the wires have been tapped at that

point you may be pretty sure that the men concerned in that captive's suicide have something to do with the wire-tapping."

"Do you know any of the wire-tappers, Chief?"

"No one has ever gained a good description of them in the police department. But by applying to the general manager of the Western Union you may be able to find out something about the crooks. Owing to the fact that the wire-tappers are expert operators, it's reasonable to suppose that they have at some period of their lives been employes of that Company. It seems to me the manager ought to have somebody under suspicion."

"Very true. If he has we might run down the suspected parties and ascertain if they belong to the gang at the old manor," said Old King Brady. "It's evident by this chart that the company has had out tracers to follow the lines and locate the places where they have been and are being tapped."

"That is self-evident."

Some more conversation ensued, and the Bradys set out for the Morgue, at the foot of East 26th street.

When they reached the handsome new edifice and met the keeper he recognized them with a nod and a smile, and asked, cheerfully:

"Well, Old King Brady, what do you want here to-day?"

"I wish to see the floater brought in this afternoon."

"The one with the bullet hole in his temple?"

"Yes; that's the chap."

"Come this way and I'll show him to you."

He led the officers inside.

Pausing before a slab upon which lay a body covered by a sheet he pointed at it and said, grimly:

"There he is."

Old King Brady drew the sheet aside from the face.

The moment the detectives saw the white, set features of the man they glanced at each other and nodded.

"He's the one!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes. I saw his face distinctly when he was alive."

Turning to the Morgue keeper the boy asked, carelessly:

"Did you find any marks of violence upon this body except the wound in the right temple?"

"Not a mark."

"Were there any marks of identification on his body, such as a tattoo, a curious mole, a broken bone?"

"Not a scar or other blemish."

"As a matter of form, we will examine him."

"Proceed."

"Meantime you bring his clothing here."

"All right, sir."

When the keeper went away the detectives made a searching examination of the corpse.

They failed to discover any marks of an unusual character on his skin.

By the time they finished the keeper returned with the clothes.

The detectives took them, made a careful examination of each separate article, and found that, although they were in the last stages of dilapidation, they had once been the finest procurable.

"It is very evident," said Old King Brady, "that this man was not a poor, miserable tramp, such as he appeared to us. In the first place, his hands and feet are comparatively small, white and well cared for. His body is that of a person who was nourished on good foods. His features are patrician, and the only reason his hair and beard were so long and unkempt was that for a long time he was unable to properly care for them."

"You think he was a well-bred man, then?"

"Precisely. The evidence lies before you."

"How are we to find out who he is?"

Old King Brady turned to the Morgue keeper and asked:

"Have you a photograph of this unfortunate?"

"We have. We photograph every subject brought here."

"Have any reporters of the daily papers called yet?"

"No; not one. But they will, of course."

"Then give them a picture of this man, and get them to have it published with their account of the case. It may lead to the relatives of this man reclaiming the body."

"That's a good plan, Mr. Brady, and I'll do it."

"Are you sure there was nothing in the man's pockets?"

"Positive, sir."

"I'll see where his clothing was made."

As he spoke, Old King Brady picked up the trousers and examined the suspender buttons.

Upon them was embossed the name of "Howard & Co., N. Y."

Making a note of it and securing a piece of the cloth the old detective thanked the Morgue keeper and departed, saying:

"Notify us if anyone calls and identifies the corpse."

"I'll telephone you at headquarters, sir."

When the detective reached the street he led his companion to a drug store, consulted a directory and located Howard & Co.

"The clothier is on Broadway, near 23d street," said Old King Brady. "We'll take a crosstown car and go over and see him."

This plan was carried out.

Upon reaching the fashionable store in question, the Bradys called for the proprietor, and introduced themselves.

"A man was killed," said the old detective, producing the piece of cloth he had taken from the corpse, "and he wore a pair of trousers made of this cloth, upon which there were buttons of blue steel, bearing your name."

"Well?" demanded Mr. Howard, taking the sample and examining it.

"We wish to find out if you know who the man is."

"Can you describe his appearance? I am personally acquainted with most of our steady customers, and might be able to identify the party to help your work."

Old King Brady gave him a vivid description of the corpse, but the clothier frowned, and scowled, and pondered, and shook his head, and finally said:

"No; I don't know him by that description."

"Would you mind going to the Morgue and looking at him?"

"Certainly I'll go."

They returned to the grim building with him.

He viewed the corpse keenly a few moments, and, shaking his head again, said:

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, gentlemen, but I don't know this man, and never saw him before in my life."

The Bradys felt a deep pang of disgust.

They thanked the merchant for his kindness, and all went out again and parted in the street.

"One setback," growled Old King Brady.

"Never mind," consolingly answered the boy, "we have several more chances of finding out who he is."

"Which way now?"

"To the Van Velt manor."

"To trace the wires?"

"Exactly."

They rode up to 65th street, on the Second avenue elevated railroad, and made their way up to the old house.

Observing two galvanized wires spliced to the main line in the street, the detectives carefully traced them into the grounds.

Here they were fastened to insulators in the trees, and ran over to the roof of the ruined old building.

The detectives found the front door open.

Passing in and going up-stairs, they noted where the wires came in through the skylight, and traced them along the wall.

They passed through the door frame into the hall, and thence were brought down-stairs to the cellar.

Here they passed through the stone wall.

By the light of their lanterns the Bradys keenly scrutinized the masonry, and then began to sound it where the wires hung.

At one spot a hollow sound was emitted. They now saw that a door of wood was painted and kalsomined to look as though the stone work were set in the wall. It was a clever deception.

The detectives rushed at it and struck the door with their shoulders.

A violent crash was heard as it was burst open.

The Bradys were precipitated head first into an old wine vault, where they landed on their hands and knees.

Hastily scrambling to their feet they glanced around, and gave utterance to exclamations of astonishment at what they beheld.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH.

The vault into which the Bradys plunged was about twenty feet in diameter.

It contained a couple of chairs, a table, on which stood a telegraphic key, sounder and relay, and upon the floor lay a number of newspapers.

An oil lamp hung over the table from the brick arch above.

Standing within this vault were ten masked men.

Every one of them were aiming revolvers at the heads of the two detectives, and the leader of the gang, whom the officers recognized as the man they traced from Moses Levy's, said, in harsh, cruel tones:

"Gentlemen, you are trapped!"

"Thunder!" ejaculated Old King Brady, in dismay.

"Move hand or foot and you are dead men!"

"They've got us!" Harry exclaimed.

"Up with your hands!"

"We surrender," said Old King Brady, quietly.

"You are wise."

"Oh, we don't wish to get riddled with bullets."

"You are Secret Service men known as the Bradys, aren't you?"

"We are, and you seem to know it, too."

"I understand that you are on to our game."

"Wire-tapping?"

"Yes."

"That's what we are looking up."

"Well, now that you've found us, it has got you into trouble."

"Perhaps; temporarily."

"You are mistaken. We are desperate men, playing for high stakes. We will brook no interference. Since you have got dead evidence against us, we mean to prevent you from using your information."

"What can you do?"

"Kill you!"

The vindictive manner in which he said this sent a thrill of horror through the detectives, for they saw he meant what he said.

But Old King Brady did not flinch.

Looking the man straight in the eyes, he said:

"You don't dare."

"Why don't we?"

"Because our Chief knows we are here. If we don't return to the office alive within a reasonable length of time, every officer on the force will be turned loose, to run you down and punish you."

"Bah! What do we care for your department?"

"You will if you feel its power."

"Boasts of that sort won't deter us."

"You are at liberty to do as you please."

The villain scanned the Bradys thoughtfully a moment.

Finally he came to a determination. He said:

"Yes, we must dispose of you effectively. You are both too dangerous to our interests to have you floating around loose. Already you know too much for our safety. By coming here you have run your heads into the jaws of death."

"We have, eh?"

"That's what I'm telling you."

"How do you figure that out?"

"I'll tell you when the proper time comes."

While this dialogue was going on the Bradys were keenly scrutinizing each individual member of the gang.

They wanted to thoroughly impress their images upon

their minds so that if they should meet any of them in the future unmasked they might know them at a glance.

It was to gain time and get a protracted view of them that the old detective was trying to prolong the conversation.

Finally the leader of the gang asked Old King Brady:

"Weren't you both here last night shadowing this house?"

"No use lying—we were."

"Up on the roof, peering through the skylight?"

"Did you see us there?"

"Yes."

"And you saw all that transpired?"

"I don't deny it."

"And one of these men saw you at the Morgue to-day."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You went to view the remains of the man found in the river."

"Well, well! You seem to be pretty well posted about us."

"Oh, we've been watching you closely since last night. We knew you were gathering evidence with which to convict us."

"You've made no error, sir."

"Now do you wonder at our desire to annihilate you?"

"We don't. You were guilty of one of the most atrocious crimes it was ever my misfortune to witness. You deliberately compelled a man to blow out his own brains."

"He killed himself, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can't accuse me of murder, then, can you?"

"Not very well."

"Then don't make such a fuss about it."

"Why did you commit that horrible deed?"

"That's none of your business. I had a good reason."

"We shall expose it some day."

"You won't live long enough to do that."

"I don't agree with you. I want to see your face."

"That you will never do."

"Won't I?"

As Old King Brady said this, he suddenly sprang at the man, seized his mask and made a violent attempt to tear it off.

But the villain saw him coming and divined his intention.

As quick as a flash he recoiled, flung out his hand, seized the old detective by the throat and pushed him back.

"Help!" he roared, in exasperated tones.

Before the detective had an opportunity of carrying out his purpose he was seized on all sides and hurled to the floor.

"Bind him!" snarled the leader, as he readjusted his mask over his face. "If he resists beat him to death!"

With twisted handkerchiefs the gang secured the old detective's hands behind his back and left him lying, panting, on the floor.

Regarding him a few moments in silence, with a ferocious expression gleaming through the eyeholes in his mask, the man cried:

"You treacherous dog! I won't give you a chance to play such a trick as that on me again."

"Oh, I'll find out yet who you are!" grimly said the old sleuth, as he scrambled to his feet. "You'll see!"

A sneering laugh escaped the wire-tapper.

"Fool!" said he, contemptuously, "within half an hour you will be as dead as a doornail, and don't you forget it!"

Just then one of the men growled:

"Let's put them asleep without any more talk, Amos."

"Amos, eh? So that's your name, is it?" laughed Old King Brady.

"You lunkhead!" roared the villain, angrily, at his man. "Why ain't you more careful about using my name?"

"It's an unusual name and easily recognized," interpolated the old detective, tauntingly. "When I make inquiries at the Western Union they may be able to recognize you by it, old fellow. That was a dead giveaway."

"Oh, pshaw!" said the man Amos scolded. "Why pay any attention to his raving? He can't make use of any knowledge he may have by the time we get through with him."

"That's so," conceded the villain. "Take them up to the room above."

The gang pounced on the detectives, and they were dragged across the cellar, up the stairs, and were thrust into what looked like an old storeroom, with a massive oak door, which was slammed shut.

Left in the gloom, they heard their enemies lock and bolt it.

"Stuff up the cracks with paper!" shouted Amos.

The detectives heard the men carrying out this order.

Finally one of them exclaimed:

"It's done!"

"Now turn on the gas!"

One of the men went to a meter and carried out the order.

The sickening fumes rushed into the little room in which the Bradys were confined, and they quickly smelled it.

A feeling of alarm took possession of them.

"By Jove! they intend to smother us like rats in a trap!" the old detective growled. "Do you smell the gas, Harry?"

"Yes. I'd like to see where it is coming in, so I could make an effort to plug up the pipe. But if I light a match it will blow up this room like a powder magazine and destroy us."

"Try to loosen my bonds."

"Come here. I'll cut them with my knife."

He liberated the old detective, and Old King Brady exclaimed:

"Search around and see if you can feel where that gas is entering. If it continues to come in much longer we are doomed, as sure as fate."

"This isn't the only time we've been in the jaws of death, Old King Brady," replied the boy, as he did as his companion asked.

CHAPTER VI.

BEATING THE POOLROOMS.

The villain, Amos, and his nine masked men did not remain in the basement hall long after they locked the Bradys

in the storeroom in the Van Velt manor and turned the gas into the room.

As they expected the gas to asphyxiate their victims, and had no desire to hear their dying struggles, they returned to the vault in the cellar, to resume their work at the telegraph instruments.

It was then about six o'clock in the evening.

The Bradys were in great peril.

While the gas kept pouring into the room from a hidden pipe they went groping along the walls in an effort to find it.

The deadly fumes were fast overpowering them.

"Have you found the pipe yet, Harry?" gasped the old detective.

"No; but I'll hunt till I drop," grimly answered the boy.

"What fiends those wire-tappers are!"

"Amos truly said we were in the jaws of death."

"Confound him! I didn't believe he would try to murder us because we saw him force his victim, night before last, to blow his brains out in the room up-stairs. Nor did I think our knowledge of their plant here for tapping wires was provocation enough to cause them to kill us. It shows what desperate men they are."

"Probably, as he said, they are playing for high stakes, and won't let the mere matter of two human lives stand between them and the acquisition of so much wealth."

They continued hunting for the pipes.

Meantime the gas was making them sick.

Their heads began to throb, their lungs ached, and they felt an almost irresistible desire to lie down and go to sleep.

It was a dreadful situation, and nothing but their dogged determination kept them on their feet.

"If it wasn't for the danger of blowing this room up, I'd light my lantern," Harry muttered. "I can't see a thing in here."

"We have got to force the door open," gasped Old King Brady.

"Our united strength is hardly equal to it," the boy replied. "It is massive oak, and is locked and bolted outside."

"Make an effort, anyway. This is an extremely old house and the doors can't be as firm as they were years ago."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Rush at the door together and hit it with our shoulders."

"Give me your hand, so we can keep together."

Having located the door, they retreated a few yards.

At a signal they plunged ahead.

When their shoulders came in contact with the woodwork there ensued a violent thud and a dull, rasping sound.

To their astonishment the door immediately flew open, and the impetus of their rush carried them out into the hall.

Out poured the deadly gas in smothering volumes.

The detectives were panting.

When they recovered their faculties, Harry exclaimed:

"Well, by Jove! this is amazing."

Old King Brady retreated to a safe distance and lit his lantern.

Reflecting the light upon the door, they saw that the

latch socket and the bolt socket had been torn out with the screws, carrying part of the woodwork.

Upon a keener examination they discovered that the wood was rotten, thus weakening the hold of the screws.

"It's no wonder it didn't withstand our attack," the old detective commented. "It's all decayed from old age."

"Our enemies were not alarmed, either, or they would by this time have been here," said the boy, who had been watching and listening for some signs of danger.

"I'd like to find out just what news they are stealing off the wires."

"As they may have gone back to the vault, we might return there, listen to what they have to say and find out their plans."

"Try the experiment. They won't suspect that we are around."

They went down in the cellar, and through the broken door, painted to resemble the stone work, they saw the wire-tappers at work.

Amos sat at the table and his pals stood grouped around him.

The detectives slunk up against the walls where the gloom was densest, and listened to their conversation, while the sounder and relay were busily ticking.

"You want to get ready now, boys," they heard Amos say, as he glanced at his watch. "In five minutes the third race at the Louisville track will be run. Is No. 7 at the window of the bookmaker in the saloon on Third avenue, waiting for the signal from us, No. 2?"

"Yes," answered one of the men. "I gave him your \$5,000 and told him to plunge it straight, at any odds, on the horse we would name. He will attend to his part of the scheme."

"And you are ready to run to him from here with the news?"

"I am. Are you sure of the operator in our employ at the track preventing the news going to this city over the main line as early as our man sends the news to us over the general news line?"

"Oh, No. 3, at the track, won't fail us."

There followed an interval of silence.

The Bradys were quick-witted fellows.

In a twinkling they understood the whole plot, and Old King Brady whispered to the boy:

"Do you see through the game?"

"I think I do."

"Shall I give you my version of it?"

"By all means. I'll see if it tallies with my idea."

"Briefly, then, they are beating the gamblers, in this way: One of the gang, called No. 3, is at the race track, ready to cut the wire over which the name of the winning horse in the third race will be telegraphed broadcast. That will delay the news from reaching the bookmakers in New York long enough for them to get in their fine work."

"Exactly."

"Then No. 3 will go to another wire, which has been tapped here, and telegraph the name of the winner. The news

will be received here by the gang, by tapping it from the designated line."

"I see."

"As soon as the man Amos learns the name of the winning nag he will send man No. 2 rushing over to Third avenue, where a poolroom is located."

"That's it."

"One of the gang—No. 7—is in the poolroom with money to bet. No. 2 will hear from the ticker that a certain horse has won. He will know that the cut wires of the regular line are severed so well that the bookies in the city won't get the news at once. He will then signal to No. 7 the name of the winner. No. 7 will plunge the five thousand dollars on the winning horse, for the bookmaker will lay odds up to the time the horses go to the post. He will be betting on a sure thing."

"It's a clever game."

"Very, Harry. My idea is that when the bet is made, they will signal No. 7 to repair the cut wire, and send the news over the line that the horse won. No. 2 will then cash in his bet."

"That's an easy way to get rich."

"Very easy, and very rapid. If he gets big odds on his choice he can quit the poolroom with fifteen or twenty thousand dollars."

"It's an infamous swindle!"

"Does my idea accord with yours?"

"In every particular."

"To verify it, you go out, hide, and watch for No. 2 to come out. Follow him to the gambling resort carefully."

"I shall. I'm curious to see the result."

Just then Amos suddenly exclaimed, as he listened to the telegraph instrument:

"Horses at the post!"

The busy relay kept ticking a while.

"Now they're at the quarter, and Gold Bug is in the lead."

No. 2 nodded, and waited with feverish anxiety.

Tick-tick-tick! went the sounder.

"They're at the half, and Gold Bug leads by a length," said Amos.

Everyone was in a state of nervousness.

"Now they pass the three-quarter post, and Gold Bug is two lengths ahead."

Every man smiled.

They felt that Gold Bug must win.

"They're in the stretch!" said Amos, reading the ticker.

For a while there was a deep, impressive silence.

Then Amos exclaimed:

"Lady Queen wins. Go!"

The man called No. 2 rushed out in the cellar, dashed up-stairs like a madman, hurried through the garden, darted up the street, and Young King Brady, as Harry was designated, followed him.

He ran to Third avenue and paused near a saloon.

One of the gang stood at a window.

No. 2 spelled the winning horse's name in the mutes' alphabet.

Thereupon No. 7 hurried to a bookmaker in the back room, bet him \$5,000 that Lady Queen would win, and got odds of 5 to 1.

A few minutes afterward the bookmaker's sounder announced:

"Lady Queen, first; Gold Bug, second. Time, 1:50."

The gamblers had lost, and had to pay the bet!

CHAPTER VII.

AT LUDLOW STREET JAIL.

"Hold on there! Don't pay that bet!" cried Harry, as he darted into the poolroom just as the crook was about to cash in.

There were a number of gamblers in the room.

Glancing at Harry in amazement, the poolseller asked:

"What do you mean by that, young fellow?"

"That man is a wire-tapper," said the boy, pointing at No. 7.

The poolroom cashier swept his money back in the drawer, bent an evil glance upon No. 7, and said:

"I won't pay you till I investigate this charge."

No. 7 glared ferociously at Harry, and roared:

"You liar! what do you mean by interfering with me this way?"

"I mean simply this," replied Harry. "You are one of a gang of wire-tappers at the Van Velt mansion. Your pal in Louisville prevented the race news leaving that city by cutting the wire that runs from the track. He telegraphed the news to New York on another line, which you tapped here. A pal brought you the winner's name. You bet on a sure thing. In a little while the cut wire will be repaired and the news will be sent in."

"You——" began No. 7.

"Shut up!" roared Harry.

"I'll knock your head off!"

"Oh, I guess not. You are under arrest, sir."

"What! Are you a——"

"I'm a Secret Service man."

Harry seized the rascal as he said this.

A panic ensued among the gamblers, who thought the place was being raided.

They rushed from the room.

Harry handcuffed his man and led him into the street, where he rang up a patrol wagon.

It arrived, and the crook was driven away.

Old King Brady had followed Harry out, and made an attempt to arrest the man known as No. 2, but he ran away.

The detective chased him several blocks before he caught him.

He locked this man up.

Then he returned to the manor and met Harry at the gate.

Here each explained what had happened, and Harry said:

"That leaves only eight of the gang to be arrested."

"I'm going right in to tackle them now."

They hurried down into the cellar.

But when they got there all the crooks were gone.

The delay of No. 2 and No. 7 returning alarmed Amos, and he went to find out what detained them, and heard of the arrests.

Wild over the loss of his money and infuriated at the two detectives, he hastened back to the house.

Seeing how the Bradys escaped, he rushed down to his friends, warned them of what happened, and they fled.

When the Bradys reached the vault they found it deserted.

"Somebody tipped them off!" exclaimed the boy.

"What's that door far back in the vault?"

"Let's investigate."

Old King Brady opened it.

A flight of stairs was revealed.

Following it up into a tunnel, they passed underground to another door, up several steps and emerged in the barn.

"You recollect that the body of the suicide was taken from the house without leaving any traces on the ground?" said Harry. "Well, they must have brought the man from the house through the tunnel to the barn and thus got him out to the street."

"Sure enough!" replied Old King Brady, nodding.

"That explains the seeming mystery."

"Where could the wire-tappers have gone?"

"It won't be long ere we hear of them again," said Harry.

"The worst of it is that we don't know any of the gang by sight," remarked the old detective, regretfully. "We might pass them in the street and not recognize them. They all wore masks and thus concealed their identity from us."

As there was absolutely nothing to be gained by remaining there, the detectives seized the telegraph instruments, destroyed the wires, and went home.

On the following day, when the Coroner's Jury held an autopsy on the body and the Bradys had given their evidence, a verdict of suicide under compulsion was rendered. An expanded bullet was found in the man's skull which corresponded with the bullets in the queer-looking pistol.

The man's identity remained a mystery, but the Morgue keeper had given two newspaper reporters photographs of the poor fellow, and they were published with the articles on the subject of the finding of the body in the river.

"If any relative or friend of the dead man sees the printed pictures," said Old King Brady to his youthful partner, "the identity of the man may be revealed now."

"Unless something like that occurs," Harry answered, "we may never know who he was."

"It is my intention now to interview the two wire-tappers we captured and try to worm some information out of them regarding the operations of the gang. Incidentally, we might discover something about the suicide."

"Where are they confined?"

"Both are in Ludlow Street Jail."

"Under what names?"

"They absolutely refused to give any when arrested."

"It seems as if they were bound to keep their identity concealed."

They proceeded to the city prison, had a chat with the

warder about their object; he consented to their interviewing the prisoners, and a keeper led them to the cell of the man called No. 2.

He was looking through the grated door.

There was an ugly expression on his face when he recognized the detectives, and he demanded, in surly tones:

"Well, what do you want here?"

The detectives sized him up carefully and gauged his character.

He was a small, wiry fellow of forty, attired in a gray suit, and had a thin face, a red nose, blue eyes and a bristly moustache.

"We have called to see you for the purpose of asking a few questions about your gang," replied Old King Brady, quietly.

"Questions, eh? What do you expect—that I'll give my friends away? Don't fool yourself. I'm no squealer."

"But suppose we do something for you in return."

"That don't make any difference. I'm mum."

He had such a look of grim determination on his face that the detectives could not fail to believe him.

"You're a fool!" impatiently said the old detective. "You have lost your only chance to have your sentence modified. We will see if No. 7 hasn't more sense."

They thereupon left him.

The keeper conducted them to another cell.

Harry's prisoner was confined here, and he proved to be a big, heavily built man with a smooth face.

A sickly grin overspread his features when he recognized the officers, and the nervous, uneasy manner that overcame him showed them that he was a coward.

Recognizing his weak points, the boy said to him:

"You are in a nasty fix, old fellow. Charged with complicity in a murder, you know. Did you hear the news?"

"No," gasped the prisoner, in startled tones. "What is it?"

"The Coroner's Jury called the suicide a murder, and declared that all of Amos's gang were implicated. As you and No. 2 are the only men we could capture, you'll be tried on a charge of murder and our evidence is going to send you to the electric chair."

"Good Lord! I didn't have a hand in that job."

"Certainly not. We know that, for we were looking through the skylight in the roof and saw the man kill himself. But if we don't give our evidence you'll have to die, I suppose."

"Ain't you going to clear me?"

"No; what's the use? You won't aid us, so why should we do anything to help you, I'd like to know?"

"How can I aid you?"

"By answering our questions."

"Why—I'll tell you anything I can if you will get me out of this scrape," protested the prisoner, earnestly.

"I have a great notion to try you."

"Do, for pity's sake. I don't want to die for a crime I didn't commit," said the man, sweating with fear, and facing the young detective with an agonized expression.

"Can you tell us about the gang's plans, expose their iden-

tity, explain why the prisoner committed suicide, and so on?"

"I can tell you some of the things you wish to know."

"Don't attempt to lie to us. If you do, it will go hard with you when we find you out."

"I'll tell you the truth," declared the man, anxiously.

Harry turned to his partner with a smile.

"We've got him nicely trapped," he whispered.

"Get all the news you can, my boy."

"You take down in shorthand all he says."

Old King Brady nodded, and drew a notebook and pencil from his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO. 7 CONFESSES.

The prisoner, pale and anxious, was watching the Bradys keenly.

He felt that his life was in their hands.

Finally Harry ceased whispering to his partner, and, turning to the wire-tapper, he demanded:

"What's your name?"

"Martin Warren."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-five."

"Where do you live?"

"With my wife, at No. 1036 Second avenue."

"Have you any occupation?"

"Only that of gambling."

"You are a member of Amos's gang?"

"I am."

"How came you to join it?"

"At the request of Amos. He and half a dozen of his pals were telegraph operators, linemen and electricians. They worked for the Western Union, and formed a plan to beat the company by tapping their wires in order to make money. As it was necessary to have men in other businesses in the gang, they approached several gamblers and crooks and took them into the game. I was among the latter."

"Well?"

"We were an oath-bound gang."

"Organized to beat the brokers, bankers and poolrooms?"

"Exactly."

"Who is this man Amos?"

"His full name is Amos Cummings."

"Has he a family?"

"No. He was a dissolute fellow, who worked all over the country and was discharged for habitual drunkenness."

"And the rest of the gang?"

"To keep our identity hidden, we are named by numbers."

"Do you know the real names of your pals?"

"Not one."

"Have you ever seen their faces?"

"No. When we meet, the operators keep masked before me."

"Have they a regular rendezvous?"

"Yes. At the Van Velt manor."

"No other place?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Outside of beating the poolrooms, how do they beat the brokers?"

"By tapping the wires that bring information to the Stock Exchange, checking the news from reaching the brokers long enough to buy stocks that are advancing."

"Much on the same plan that they beat the poolrooms?"

"Exactly the same way."

"How about the prisoner whom Amos caused to commit suicide? Can you tell me anything about him?"

"I can."

"Proceed."

"One night a month ago a closed carriage dashed up to the old manor. Cummings and the prisoner were in it. The prisoner was drugged. Cummings and the driver carried him into the house and confined him in one of the upper rooms."

"Do you know his name?"

"I never heard it mentioned."

"Didn't any of the gang know the man?"

"No."

"He was simply Amos Cummings's prisoner?"

"Yes. We hadn't anything to do with him."

"What personal spite had Cummings against him?"

"One night I heard Amos talking to the man. Our captain had a paper he wanted the man to sign. The prisoner refused. Amos threatened him. It was useless. The prisoner was obstinate. Then I heard Amos say to him in a rage: 'If you don't sign this paper you may as well commit suicide, for you will never escape alive from this house, to give me away to the police.' The man replied: 'Sooner than affix my signature to that document I would kill myself. You will never force me to comply with your villainous demands!' That made Cummings furious. 'I'll force you to obey me!' said he. 'I'll starve you into obedience. You'll soon change your tune.' The prisoner laughed at him. 'I defy you!' said he. 'I'll perish before I'll give you the satisfaction of beating me.' Cummings left him."

"Did he starve the man?" asked Harry.

"Yes, he did. For nearly a week before the man's death he had nothing to eat or drink. But he wouldn't give in. It made Cummings mad. He saw that he could do nothing with the man. In despair of forcing him to sign the paper he finally told us he was going to get rid of the man. We all objected to his murdering the prisoner. He declared that he would not kill the man, but would make the prisoner kill himself. On the night you were at the old house Amos went up-stairs with some of the gang with rifles. He ordered the men to thrust the weapons through some holes in the walls and cover the prisoner. Then he went into the room where the man was confined and, handing him a pistol, ordered the poor wretch to kill himself. The man evidently realized the hopelessness of his position and felt desperate. Seeing no chance to escape, tortured by starvation and fearless of death, he killed himself, to get out of his misery."

"We witnessed the suicide," said Harry.

"Then you know all about it."

"Only as much as we could see."

"Well, I can't tell you any more."

"Don't you know what the document was that Cummings was so anxious to have the prisoner sign?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"That it was important to Cummings's interests is undoubted."

"Of course. That's natural."

"And when the man killed himself, what occurred?"

"We carried him from the room, down into the cellar, through a secret underground passage to the barn, out through the grounds to Avenue A, and there we were chased by a cop."

"Yes; we know about that."

"Running down to the river with the corpse, we got into a row boat and pulled out on the river. Near Hell Gate we flung the dead man overboard and rowed away."

"The body was afterward picked up in that vicinity by Captain Paddy McDermott, of the tugboat Happy-Go-Lucky," said Harry. "He brought it to the Morgue."

"So I read in the newspapers."

"You can't throw any light on the mystery, then?"

"No. All I know are the facts I've given."

Harry questioned the prisoner further. But he could not gain any more information of any value from him.

The boy then said to Warren:

"As it is very evident that you had no hand in killing the man we shall see that you are not executed. But you will have to pay the penalty for wire-tapping and for the attempt upon the lives of my partner and myself."

"Oh, I'm willing to stand for what I really did."

The detectives then left the man.

When they reached the street, Old King Brady said to Harry:

"Let us go over to Fourth avenue and visit the curiosity shops above 23d street. I am curious to find out who bought that antique pistol with which the man committed suicide."

"Got it with you?"

"I have."

They crossed the city and rode up-town.

A call was made at the various dealers in antiques, and they finally entered a place called "The Old Curiosity Shop."

It was filled with a strange assortment of goods.

A little old man with a gray beard came from amid the stock. Old King Brady showed him the pistol, and asked:

"Was this thing bought here?"

The old man examined the weapon closely and nodded.

"Yes," said he, "it was. About two months a handsome young lady was in here purchasing some antique furniture, some pictures and a few curiosities. Among them was this queer revolver. I bought the pistol years ago in Europe. It was loaded with expanding bullets when I sold it."

"A young lady?" echoed Harry, in amazement.

"Yes; a fashionable young lady," replied the shop keeper.

"What was her name and address?"

"I'll see in my books where I delivered the things she bought."

He procured his books and searched them.

Finally he found the entry he wanted, and said:

"Here it is. Miss Dora Darrell, No. 805 Fifth avenue."

The detectives thanked him and departed.

"Strange," commented Old King Brady, when they reached the sidewalk, "that a young woman living on Fifth avenue should be the possessor of this pistol. How in thunder did Amos Cummings get it from her, to make his prisoner kill himself?"

CHAPTER IX.

FORCING THE FENCE.

At Harry's suggestion the detectives proceeded to No. 805 Fifth avenue, to question Dora Darrell about the unique revolver.

But they found the house tightly closed, the shades being drawn over the windows; the doors were boarded up, and the building looked as if the occupants had gone away to remain a long time.

No one answered the bell, which seemed to indicate that there was no caretaker left on the premises, so the Bradys inquired next door.

A servant answered their ring, and Harry asked her:

"Can you tell me who lives next door?"

"Sure an' I can," promptly answered the girl.

"Well, who is it?"

"Richard Darrell an' his niece Dora."

"Are they in town?"

"No, sor."

"Where are they?"

"Miss Dora wint ter Saratogy a month ago, an' her uncle was goin' ter folly her a few days afterward."

"Do you know where the young lady is stopping?"

"I don't, that."

"What business is her uncle in?"

"Sure an' he's retoired an' rich."

"Are there any other members of the family?"

"Only a cook an' a chambermaid, an' they're laid off."

That was all the detective could find out, so they thanked the girl and departed, as much mystified as they were before.

"Is it worth while going to Saratoga to find out what Miss Darrell knows about the pistol?" queried Harry.

"Hardly!" replied his partner. "Even were we to meet the girl she might not be able to explain how the weapon came into the possession of Amos Cummings. I can't see how it would help us to solve the mystery of this crime."

"Then our best course will be to run down Cummings, try to get him in our power, and force him to confess."

"After the scare we've given the wire-tappers they will be likely to keep away from the Van Velt manor and stay under cover."

"Perhaps. There's this argument against that theory,

however: As we spoiled their game to bilk the poolroom, and they may be strapped for money, they are likely to try another game to raise some coin, and we may thus get on to their location."

"Very true. We scarcely know where to look for them, though."

"How about consulting the map furnished us by the Western Union, to locate them at one or another of the points where the lines are designated as being tapped?"

"It's a plan worth trying."

With this purpose in view, they set out.

The detectives found upon investigation, however, that the places marked on the map were old ones.

In each instance they learned that the crooks had used the wires for past exploits and moved away.

By the end of the day the detectives learned that all the places designated had been used by the wire-tappers, and that the telegraph company had removed the auxiliary wires.

"As we can't find any trace of them this way," said Old King Brady at length, "we had better see if we can find out what Moses Levy knows about what the man Cummings pawned."

"You mean the fence from whose Third avenue place Cummings was emerging when we first began to shadow him?"

"Exactly."

"The pawnbroker may not give him away."

"Of course those fences protect their patrons, but we may find a means of loosening his tongue."

"Come ahead, then, and we will try him."

They went up-town and passed into the pawnbroker's store.

It was a gloomy-looking place, most of the ground floor being hidden from view by a wooden partition.

Levy was behind the counter.

He was a dirty, old man, with a bald head, a big nose, on which a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles were perched, and a long, flowing, gray beard covered the lower part of his face.

There was a black skull-cap on his head, and when the two detectives entered he gazed over the top of his spectacles at them.

"Ach, mein cracious!" he exclaimed, assuming a happy smile which he did not feel. "It's de Pradys."

"Yes, Moses," cheerfully answered Harry, "and you look as if you were delighted to see us."

"So I vas," replied the Jew, rubbing his hands together and grinning harder than ever. "So I vas, mein tear poy. Dot ish right. Velcome by Levy's shop."

"Thank you. I always thought you were a friend of ours."

"Vy," said Moses, "I could lay down mein life for you."

"Of course you could, old fellow."

"Now vot kin I do for mein vriends to-day?"

"Just put on your hat and coat, Moses!" blandly answered the boy. "We wish to bring you down to headquarters. The Chief is so fond of you that he wants to keep you with him for a week or two."

The Jew turned pale.

"Holy fader Apraham!" he gasped.

"Ain't that nice?" asked Harry.

"Vot dit I dit?" groaned the fence.

"I don't mind telling you. On the night of the tenth a man named Amos Cummings came in here and pledged something which the Chief is particularly anxious to get. As he knows very well that you won't give it up without a struggle, he is going to lock you up, and we'll come back here, turn this place upside down and secure what he wants."

"Sherusalem!" roared Levy, in tones of horror.

"We expect to wreck the place," continued Harry. "Of course, we will bring to light many stolen articles for the police have searched in vain for years, and that will make it all the worse for you. But never mind. It will be all right."

"No! No! No!" gasped the Jew.

"You can't stop us," said Harry.

"I vas ruint!"

"Don't worry. It can't be helped, Moses."

"But just t'ink of de disgrace."

"Get ready; we have no time to waste."

The old Jew leaned over the counter with an anxious look upon his wrinkled face; placed his hand beside his mouth and whispered, in a mysterious manner:

"Hush!"

"Well?"

"Listen!"

"To what?"

Moses drew a roll of money from his pocket.

Stripping off a fifty-dollar bill, he laid it on the counter, pointed a trembling finger at it, and said:

"Take dot und got oud ohf here."

"What's that?" asked Harry, smilingly, "a bribe?"

"Dot vas hush-money."

"And you give it to me?"

"Yah; all for you. Ain'd I chenerous?"

"Very," said the boy, in dry tones.

He drew a cigar from his pocket, bit off the end, folded up the bill lengthwise and ignited at at the gas fixture.

A wild yell of horror escaped Moses as the boy calmly lit his cigar with the money, and with bulging eyes the Jew made a frantic snatch at the bill and tore it from the boy's hand.

"You vas grazy?" he shrieked, putting out the flame. "Puddy near you vould haf purned id all ub. Now I will haf to got a new vun from de Dreasury, for dis purnt piece."

Harry glanced at him carelessly and asked:

"Ain't you ready to go with us yet?"

Moses began to cry.

"Von't you led me go dis dime?" he whined.

"Can't do it unless we get that pledge of Cummings."

"But if I gief it to yer I'm ruint, I dell yer."

"See here, Moses. If you don't come along I'll pull you out of here by the head. Do you understand?"

"I can'd do id," protested the Jew sadly. "I gief you de bledge."

He turned to a big, open safe and took out a package, upon which was a stub bearing the following writing:

"April 10th. Amos Cummings. No. 4328."

This he reluctantly handed to Harry.

Glancing at it, the boy put it in his pocket.

"Is this all?" he demanded.

"Dot ish all," growled the Jew. "Haf I got ter go now?"

"Well, if we find you haven't deceived us, we may not molest you. But should it prove that you have played a game on us, we will come back and put you in the cooler for ten years, and take everything you've got in the place."

"I vas honest, so help me Isaac!" said the Jew, fervently.

"Well, we shall see," the boy answered.

And, accompanied by Old King Brady, he left the store and they walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERCEPTED TELEGRAM.

A broad smile overspread Old King Brady's face when they reached the street, and he glanced at his partner and exclaimed:

"You fooled the fence very cleverly, Harry."

"I got what I wanted," answered the boy, quietly. "I've always been curious to know what Cummings pawned, and now we can ascertain. It may prove to be a valuable clew."

"Come into this doorway and I'll open the mysterious parcel."

He alluded to the hall beside a bakery.

It was a secluded spot, and they stepped into it.

Here Harry drew the parcel from his pocket and tore off the wrapper.

A heavy gold watch, a large diamond ring, and a big diamond stud, all of man's size, were revealed in the parcel.

The detectives expected something like this.

At a glance they appraised the value of the jewelry at \$2,000.

"Where did Cummings get this stuff?" muttered the boy.

Old King Brady held the ring to the light gleaming from the gas fixture in the bakery window.

He saw some engraving in the ring.

It was very fine, and he had to study it carefully a while before he could make out the name "Richard Darrell."

Next he looked at the watch.

Upon the shield on the case were the initials "R. D."

The spiral screw of the stud had the same letters cut on it.

"What do you see?" asked Harry, who was watching him.

"The name of Dora Darrell's uncle."

"Engraved on the jewelry?"

"Yes."

"How strange!"

"I'm puzzled over it."

"How did Cummings get these things and the pistol with which he caused his prisoner to commit suicide from the Darrells?"

"That remains for us to find out."

The Bradys were greatly mystified.

"Do you suppose Cummings is a thief, and robbed the Darrell family of these things?" asked the boy.

Old King Brady shook his head.

"No," he replied, "I don't believe that."

"We ought to interview Dora Darrell."

"That might repay us."

"Come to the branch post-office in the vicinity of their home. We may find out their address there. When people go off to the country, they usually notify the postal authorities of their change of address, so their mail can be forwarded to them. The Darrells must have done this."

The detectives hurried away.

Reaching the sub-station they wanted and going in, they asked for the superintendent, and he met them at the window.

"Can you tell us the address of Richard and Dora Darrell, of No. 805 Fifth avenue?" Harry asked him.

"I'll see," said the superintendent.

He referred to an address book.

But there was no change of address in it of people named Darrell, and he so informed the detectives.

They were greatly disappointed.

When they found how hopeless their plan was, Old King Brady was struck with another idea.

"But one thing remains to be done unless we go to Saratoga," said he, in low tones.

"To what do you refer?" asked Harry, curiously.

"Telegraph to the Chief of the Police Department of Saratoga. He may know their address there."

"There's a telegraph office just above here."

"We can try the plan."

Leaving the post-office they went to the telegraph office.

Old King Brady wrote the following message and sent it:

"Chief of Police, Saratoga: Send me address of Richard and Dora Darrell, of No. 805 Fifth avenue, New York, care of this office. Also let me know if they are acquainted with one Amos Cummings. OLD KING BRADY."

A few moments later, to their astonishment, the telegraph operator exclaimed, in startled tones:

"By Jove! here's an answer already."

"What! For me?" gasped the old detective.

"Yes. But it don't seem to be from the Chief of the Saratoga Police."

He handed a telegram to Old King Brady.

The two detectives read the following lines with the greatest amazement, while the operator gazed on:

"Old King Brady: The Darrells are not in Saratoga. Your search for them is useless. They are well acquainted with AMOS CUMMINGS."

For a moment there was deep silence.

Then Old King Brady exclaimed, vehemently:

"Cummings is tapping the wire somewhere on which our message went out, and has intercepted and answered it."

"You are right," replied Harry. "He's a cheeky villain."

"By Jove! he knows what we are up to now."

"And being forewarned he will try to outwit and defeat us."

"Harry, we have given ourselves away to him."

"Can't be helped. Who would have suspected he was on the wire?"

"I wish I knew where to find him."

Harry now asked the operator:

"Won't our message reach Saratoga?"

"Yes. If a wire-tapper picked it off the main line that won't prevent it going on to its destination."

"Then we can expect a reply?"

"Certainly. Wait here a while."

The detectives sat down and began to discuss Cummings's impudent reply to their telegram.

Within half an hour a message came in from Saratoga, couched in the following terms:

"Old King Brady: No one named Darrell in Saratoga. HAWLEY."

That settled the matter.

When they departed Harry said:

"Cummings told the truth."

"Then he must know where they are."

"Undoubtedly. Let's see if any of the Darrells' neighbors know anything about them."

Going over to Fifth avenue, they made careful inquiries.

One of the neighbors was the only person except the servant to whom they had formerly spoken who seemed to know anything about the man and his niece.

He was an inquisitive old fellow who made it a point to watch and gossip about his neighbors. He said:

"You're detectives, eh? And you want to find out about that man and his niece, do you? Well, I might give you a little information, if I had a mind to. Come in?"

"No. We'll remain on the stoop," said Harry.

"Well," said the old man, "Richard Darrell was a rich miser. He rarely ever went out, and seldom spoke to any of his neighbors. As a matter of fact, we could not find out anything at all about him. He was very fond of Miss Dora, his brother's orphaned daughter, and had adopted her and made her his heiress. He gave her plenty money to spend, and she mingled with a very fashionable set, and was away from home a great deal."

"What sort of a looking man was Darrell?"

"A medium-sized, well-dressed man of sixty. He had a clean-shaven face, iron-gray hair, and a rather florid complexion."

"And Miss Dora?"

"She's a perfect blond, very stylish, and about twenty years old."

"Had she any callers?"

"Well, yes. At least, a man who came to the house occa-

sionally probably called on her, for she invariably let him out."

"Do you know who he was?"

"I once heard her call him Amos Cummings."

"Ah! Can you describe his appearance?"

"Not very well, as I only saw him at a distance. He was a big man, with a short, dark beard, and he usually dressed well."

"Rather a meagre description."

"It's the best I can give you."

"Do any of the tradesmen know the Darrells?"

"I believe not, as their servants told mine that they paid cash for everything and had nothing to do with anybody in this neighborhood. Servants are great gossips as a rule, but the Darrells' were very close-mouthed, and their employers probably kept them so."

"Mysterious people."

"Very," assented the old man, regretfully, "for they always had my curiosity aroused, and I never could find out much about them. But why do you make these inquiries, sir?"

"Just idle curiosity," replied Harry. "I'm obliged to you."

"Don't mention it. Sorry I can't tell you more about them."

"Good-night."

And the detectives went away none the wiser as far as Richard Darrell and his niece were concerned.

CHAPTER XI.

BETRAYED BY A WOMAN.

On the following night, when the Bradys left Secret Service headquarters after a conference with the Chief, they suddenly became aware that they were being followed.

Their pursuer was a slender female in black clothing, whose face was concealed behind a long crepe veil.

Going up one street and down another they always found her dogging their footsteps, and the old detective muttered:

"That girl isn't at our heels from sheer force of accident, and I intend to find out what she is pursuing us for."

"Beware of treachery," admonished Harry.

"You walk ahead down this shady street and I'll jump into a doorway and cop her before she can escape."

"Is she alone?"

"Apparently. I'll whistle for you."

"Be careful, now."

They had just turned a corner.

Before the girl appeared in sight Old King Brady glided into a doorway and crouched there, concealed from view.

Harry went ahead.

The boy was about half way down the block when the girl in black suddenly came gliding around the corner.

She peered ahead, and, seeing Harry, strode after him.

Just as she arrived opposite the old detective's place of

concealment, he vented a shrill whistle and sprang from his covert, confronting the veiled girl.

She gave a cry of alarm and recoiled.

Darting forward, Old King Brady seized her wrist.

"Just stop where you are!" he exclaimed, gruffly.

"Let me go!" she gasped, in affright.

"Not till I find out who and what you are."

"I am not hurting you, am I?"

"You've been shadowing us for some time."

"What if I have?" she asked, defiantly.

"Tell me what you are doing it for?"

"I have an object in view."

"Of course. You wouldn't do it for nothing."

"Ain't you Old King Brady?"

"Yes. That's my cognomen."

"And your companion is Harry Brady?"

"Just so. Now introduce yourself."

"No. My identity must remain a mystery."

"What for?"

"Oh, I've got my reasons."

"Undoubtedly. But why are you shadowing us?"

"I've been wanting to put you on your guard."

"Against what?"

"Powerful enemies who surround you."

"What do they want?"

"Your life."

"Indeed! That's pleasant."

"Beware of an assassin."

"Who is he?"

"I dare not tell you here. I've been following you, awaiting a favorable chance to warn you of your danger."

"Why should you interest yourself in me?"

"Because I can't bear to think of a brave man miserably dying from an assassin's blow when I can warn him in time to put him on his guard."

Just here Harry joined them.

He gazed curiously at the girl, and asked his partner:

"Why is she shadowing us?"

Old King Brady told him briefly.

The girl was watching them closely, and seemed to be greatly agitated.

Finally Old King Brady turned to her and said:

"Since you won't tell me your name, at least show me your face."

He seized her veil to draw it aside.

But she clapped her hand to her face, recoiled and cried, excitedly:

"No, no! don't do that!"

"I insist."

"Should you do so I will disclose nothing."

"If you keep your name and appearance from us how can we trust you?" asked the old detective, pointedly.

"You have my word for what I say."

"That's mighty flimsy security."

The girl pondered a moment.

"Would you believe me if I tell you my name?" she asked.

"Perhaps I might."

"Then I'll tell you—I am Dora Darrell."

"What!" cried the old detective, incredulously.

"You've been trying to find me, haven't you?"

"We have. How did you find it out?"

"From the police in Saratoga. You telegraphed them for information about me. They didn't know where to find me. Soon afterward, however, an officer located me in the Grand Union, told me you wanted me in New York, and I came back to find out what you wanted. On the way here I discovered a plot against your lives. You had better heed my warning."

"What is it?"

"As I fear I am being followed and don't wish your enemies to know that I warned you I wish you would come to a securer place to talk."

"What place?"

"A friend of mine lives down this street. We will go to her house."

"Very well. Lead the way."

The veiled girl strode away, and the detectives followed her.

Both were fascinated by the weird mystery of the incident.

Pausing before a little, old-fashioned brick house with wooden blinds, the girl in black ascended the stoop and rang the bell.

An old negress opened the door.

"Ah, Missy Darrell!" she exclaimed. "Come in!"

"I've got two gentlemen with me, Dinah."

"Das all right. Bring 'em in."

"We want to use the parlor for a few moments."

"Berry well, Missy Dora. Yo' am welcome, shuah."

The girl beckoned to the two detectives and went in.

They followed her.

If the Bradys suspected treachery they certainly showed no fear as they passed the negress and strode into the dark hall.

A dim light was burning in the parlor.

They entered the apartment.

It was neatly furnished.

Two chairs were at the centre-table.

Pointing at them the mysterious girl said:

"Be seated, gentlemen, and I will explain this matter to you."

The detectives complied, and Harry said:

"You've got our curiosity excited."

"So I presume," she answered, with a subdued laugh.

"But you will soon have everything made clear to you."

"Against whom are you going to warn us?"

"Amos Cummings and his gang."

"Just as we expected."

"They are desperate men."

"Of that we have already had evidence enough."

"You have injured them deeply, and are so threatening against them in your movements that they won't rest easy until you are both in your graves."

"They have demonstrated that fact before. Now what new plot have they formed to destroy us?"

"They have taken Cummings's wife into their confidence to decoy you to your destruction."

"Indeed! What is she going to do?"

"Lure you into a house in which a trap has been prepared. When she has got you both just where she wants you, she is going to pull a lever like this—the floor will open—and down you will go to your doom."

Her remarks ended in a wild laugh, for she had pulled an iron lever in the wall, the floor beneath the detectives' chairs fell in, and they plunged down into a dark abyss.

As they fell, she flung her veil aside.

The detectives caught view of her face, and Harry gasped:

"It's Nelly O'Brien, the confidence queen!"

The next moment the trapped detectives vanished down the gloomy shaft, and the treacherous woman pulled the lever again.

Back swung the big trapdoor in the floor, minus the chairs, and the room looked as if it had never been disturbed.

"Good for you, Nelly!" cried a voice in the doorway, and the next moment Amos Cummings rushed in, followed by his seven masked friends.

"Our plan worked like a charm," laughed the girl. "The trusting fools walked right into the jaws of death. I think they'll never trouble you again when you get through with them in this house, Amos."

CHAPTER XII.

STRUGGLING FOR LIFE.

When the Bradys felt themselves plunging down through space they expected nothing short of death.

But to their amazement they landed in a pool of water, which broke the force of their fall and prevented the hard bottom of the cellar into which they fell from breaking every bone in their bodies.

They struck in three feet of water and sank with a violent splash.

Scrambling to their feet they found that except for a dull aching all over they were not badly hurt.

They were in the densest gloom.

A tinkling sound of running water reached their ears, and when Old King Brady recovered his breath, he shouted:

"Harry! Harry!"

"Well? Is that you, Old King Brady?"

"Yes. Are you all right?"

"I am. And so are you, I take it?"

"Totally uninjured."

"Where are we?"

"Evidently in the cellar."

"We must have come down at least twenty feet."

"Just what I calculated."

"By Jove! we were nicely duped by that woman."

"You recognized her, didn't you?" asked Old King Brady.

"I did. She's one of the most expert confidence women in

the United States. But she made us believe she was Dora Darrell, she spoke so cunningly."

"The woman must be ringing in with Cummings's gang. She was playing into his hands on this deal."

"Of course. Cummings must have put her up to the trick. He knew we were trying to find the Darrells, and he told this woman just what to say to trap us."

"She played her part well."

"What in thunder did she dump us down in this cellar for with the hidden mechanism in the floor of the cosey little parlor?"

"To kill us, of course," said the old detective.

"But she might have known the water would act like a cushion, to prevent the fall from killing us."

"If your dark lantern isn't smashed light it, so we can see where we are. I don't want to remain here if there is any chance to get out of this gloomy hole."

Harry found his lantern intact and ignited it.

The boy flashed the rays around.

They found themselves in a little cellar with stone walls.

The bottom was flooded with water, which was pouring in from some pipes hidden underfoot somewhere.

It was quite evident that the water was steadily rising.

"Now I understand the matter," said the boy. "Expecting to plunge us into this place, they started the water in before we arrived. It's lucky for us they did."

"Then they mean to drown us?"

"No question about that."

"Isn't there any opening in the walls?"

"None. Nor is there a flight of stairs."

"How can we get out of here, then?"

Harry shook his head gloomily, for he saw no means of escape. He began to fear that if the water rose over their heads it would pin them to the ceiling and drown them.

The boy turned the light of his lantern upward.

Overhead the rafters were within ten feet of the bottom.

In the ceiling a shaft of wood four feet square ran up to the parlor floor.

This was apparently the only opening.

When the boy observed it a gloomy look crossed his face, and he said to his companion, in dejected tones:

"The worst of it is, you can't swim."

"Not a stroke."

"When the water rises I can swim, and I'll have to hold you up. We can float in that shaft until my strength gives out. Then we will both go to the bottom."

"The water can't rise above the basement floor," said Old King Brady, "for when it gets up to the templates at the basement floor level it will pour out in the yard or the street."

"Very true. We will be floating on its surface in the shaft."

"Harry, there's no way to climb up the shaft after that happens, is there?"

"None that I can see."

"It begins to look as if we were in the jaws of death again."

"You are right, Old King Brady."

"All we can do is to wait for a fatal ending."

While they were talking the water kept steadily rising, higher every moment, and it soon was up to their armpits.

They conversed in low tones.

An hour passed by.

At the expiration of that time Old King Brady was holding Harry up, as the boy was not as tall as the old detective and the water had risen above his mouth.

Indeed, it rose so high that the old sleuth was obliged to stand on tip-toe and hold his head back in order to breathe.

"In less than five minutes more you'll have to sustain me, Harry," Old King Brady gasped.

"To yell for aid is useless, I suppose?"

"Perfectly. Only our enemies would hear our voices."

They waited.

Within a few minutes the old detective was struggling to keep the water from entering his mouth.

Harry observed it.

The time for action on his part had come.

"I'm going to swim now," said he, "and you can easily keep afloat by quietly resting your hands on my shoulders."

"Go ahead."

"Don't get panic-stricken, no matter what happens."

"Trust me."

In a moment more the boy was swimming.

Old King Brady easily kept his head above water by doing as the boy ordered, and they floated on the rising flood.

Harry did not waste his strength struggling.

A few occasional strokes sufficed to hold them up.

The boy knew that the longer he retained his strength the longer they would be able to keep their heads above water.

He did not want to drown.

Yet, when he turned the matter over in his mind, he could not help thinking that he was merely putting off the fatal moment of death for a little while.

They were bound to go under in the end, for his ability to keep them both up would only last a certain length of time.

It was an agonizing thought.

Still, human nature is prone to cling to life as long as possible, and the detectives were no exception.

The water soon reached the rafters.

Harry took good care to place himself and his burden right under the shaft, and as the water still rose, they found the cellar filled and the only space clear above was within the narrow confines of the shaft.

"It almost seems a useless struggle, Harry," said the old detective, in gloomy tones. "You'll have to give in pretty soon, anyway."

"Couldn't you wedge yourself across the shaft and hold yourself up? It would rest me some," panted the boy.

"I might try."

They made a violent effort, and Old King Brady finally succeeded in getting himself caught across the opening at an angle.

With his feet against one side and the back of his neck

against the other he was enabled to hold himself above the water.

But scarcely had he gained this position of security when the trap above suddenly burst open and Cummings's head appeared in the opening in the midst of a glare of light.

He saw them, and ripped out a violent curse.

"Baffling me, are you?" he roared, drawing a revolver.

"Well, I'll soon put an end to that game."

He aimed the pistol down, to fire at the detectives, but just then he heard a yell of:

"Fire! Fire! The house is on fire!"

Up he sprang to his feet.

The back parlor was in a blaze, and Nelly O'Brien was rushing out with her dress on fire.

With a yell of horror Cummings dropped his pistol and dashed after her, to extinguish the flames on her dress.

The pair vanished in the street, followed by Cummings's gang, who had been aroused by the clouds of smoke pouring up-stairs from the burning parlor.

An alarm was turned in, and in ten minutes the engines followed by a yelling rabble came dashing up to the burning building to put out the fire.

The Bradys heard the cries, and it made them faint and sick, for there now seemed to be no salvation for them at all!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GIRL AT BAY.

A dense cloud of smoke poured into the shaft in which the detectives were located and almost smothered them.

Above the roaring and crackling of flames they heard the voices of the firemen who had penetrated the burning building.

"Look out for that open trap in the floor, Bill," one yelled.

"Where does it lead to?" demanded a fireman, peering down.

The Bradys saw him, and Harry yelled up at him:

"Help! Help!"

With a startled cry the fireman swung a lantern into the big opening, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Hello, there! Who's that?"

"Two men. We're down here!"

"At the bottom of the shaft?"

"Yes. Get a rope and pull us out."

"Wait a minute."

He disappeared.

Old King Brady was overjoyed.

"Keep hold of me, Harry," said he.

"Can you hold us both up?"

"Easily."

"I'm tired out."

And the boy grasped him.

It was a great relief from the exhaustion of swimming.

"The firemen will save us now," gasped Old King Brady.

"I hope so. We need expect aid from no other source."

Just then the fireman reappeared above with a rope, and, dropping down one end, he yelled:

"Make fast to this and we'll pull you up."

Harry caught hold of the line.

"Pull away!" he cried.

The firemen obeyed, and he was dragged up out of the water.

When the boy reached the top his partner was pulled up.

They found themselves in the front parlor, where some firemen stood in rubber hats and coats and boots fighting the flames.

Two held a hose and several wielded axes.

Playing water into the back parlor they were rapidly putting out the flames, and a dense, white smoke arose.

Others, armed with crowbars and picks, were hacking away at the flaming articles in the burning room.

The smoke, heat and gas were intolerable.

Out to the street rushed the Bradys and joined the crowd.

Some of Cummings's men saw them.

The rage of the villains was intense, but they dared not say anything for fear of getting arrested.

Instead, they ran away to inform their chief.

No one else was in the burning building, and as the Bradys did not wish to reveal their identity to anyone, they soon hastened away, side by side.

"It's one of the most narrow escapes we've ever had," said the old detective. "We'll probably be a little more careful in future how we trust veiled females."

"Nelly O'Brien deceived us very cleverly," replied Harry, pulling a wry face, "and we were certainly a pair of fools for believing that she was Dora Darrell."

"If I get the nippers on the gay and festive Nelly, she won't bunco anybody else in a great hurry."

"The wire-tappers must have been using that house as a rendezvous, or else they've been using it to tap the adjacent wires," said Harry, thoughtfully.

"We can find that out to-morrow."

Wet and exhausted, they were glad to get home.

Next day they returned to the scene of the fire.

Not much damage had been done by the flames.

The Bradys ascended the front stoop and rang the bell.

It was answered by the old negress; but before she had a chance to say a word, the detectives pushed past her and, darting into the hall, glanced keenly around.

The sound of a telegraph sounder reached their ears.

It came from up-stairs, and they ascended as quietly as mice.

"Hear that?" whispered Old King Brady.

"It's a plant, all right," the boy answered.

"Where does that sound come from?"

"The front bedroom."

"We can see by——"

"Hello!" yelled the old negress. "a raid! A raid!"

Her heavy voice rang loudly through the hall.

Realizing that they could no longer maintain secrecy, the detectives rushed up-stairs, dashed along the hall and tried to open the door from behind which the sound of the ticker came.

It was locked.

They paused and glanced at each other.

Then they drew back and hurled themselves against the door.

It flew open.

A neat bedroom was revealed.

Near the front window was a table upon which a telegraphic outfit was rigged.

Wires ran out through the window frame and were cut in on the main line, which passed the house on the regulation poles.

At the table sat a man working the key, and beside him sat Nelly O'Brien, busy writing in a book some news she had taken from the sounder.

When the door burst open they sprang to their feet and gave utterance to startled cries upon beholding the Bradys.

The girl in particular was badly scared.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. "It's those detectives!"

"Curse them!" hissed the man, "I didn't think they'd come back. But we had to get this news."

"What fools we were to risk it!"

"Never mind, Nelly: they haven't got us yet."

The man was a very dark fellow, with black hair and a black moustache, and his clothing was rather shabby.

As soon as the Bradys saw him they recognized him not only as one of Cummings's masked men, but also as a celebrated all-around crook called Black Hogan.

He, too, recognized the Bradys.

As Harry rushed toward him, he yelled:

"You stand back, Brady, or I'll drop you!"

"So it is you, is it, Black Hogan!" cried the boy.

"Yes, me, and you'll find it out, too!"

He drew a pistol from his hip-pocket as he spoke and was about to raise it when the boy's weapon was discharged before it was ten inches from his pocket.

The boy was a dead shot, and the ball hit the man.

He gave a yell of pain, dropped his weapon, reeled back and fell to the floor, gasping, hoarsely:

"I'm winged!"

"Oh!" shrieked the girl, in maddened tones, "I'll avenge you! I'll pay you off for this!"

Hogan dropped his pistol and she stooped and picked it up.

Before she had a chance to use it, however, Old King Brady dashed forward and seized her.

"Drop that!" he cried, angrily.

"You let me go!" she screamed, struggling to get away.

"Nelly, you are my prisoner."

"I won't submit. I'll kill you——"

"Give me that gun!"

And the old detective tore it from her hand, hurled it across the room and forced her hands behind her back.

In a moment more, despite her struggles, he snapped a pair of handcuffs on her wrists.

She was frantic, panting and weeping.

"You think you've won a victory!" she shrieked, in wild tones, "but you haven't got a particle of evidence against me to use in court——"

"Tut-tut!" he interposed, contemptuously, "don't you call it a misdemeanor to go about veiled and lure us into this house to our doom? Nelly, we'll give you a stretch at Sing Sing which will keep you out of mischief for a long time on that deal."

"I defy you!"

"Oh, it won't do you any good to do so."

Just then Harry, having secured Black Hogan, picked up the book the girl had been writing in.

"What's this?" he asked.

Then he hastily glanced at the entries.

A cry of amazement escaped the boy's lips when he saw the contents of the book.

"What's the matter?" queried Old King Brady.

Harry held up the book triumphantly.

"I've got a nice little surprise package here," said he.

"Wait till you read what it says."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STOCK BROKER.

A puzzled expression flitted across Old King Brady's face as he glanced at the book in his partner's hand.

"What in thunder does it say?" he asked.

"I'll read you some of the entries they have been stealing from the Wall street wire and you can judge for yourself. Here is the first one—and you can see what it means."

He thereupon read the following:

"Messrs. J. P. Morton & Co., bankers, No. 44 Wall st.—Union Pacific, Steel, Paul, T. C. I. and Sugar. Place on 50,000 puts. Will advance two points to-morrow.—Howard & Co."

Harry turned over a page and continued reading:

"Henry Bell, 33 Broadway.—Inside information N. Y. Air Brake at 149 3-4 and Consolidated Gas, 225, cornered. Buy everything in sight for our account up to 300,000 shares.—Digby & Cooper."

The third one was couched in these terms:

"John Andrews & Son.—Informed Manhattan Railway 4's at 104 1-2 will decline. Active market in International Paper. Get us bonds of Baltimore and Ohio at 104. Advance coming sure.—Randolph."

There were several more such entries and then this line of memoranda, which the O'Brien woman had evidently jotted down for her own information:

"Cummings notified. 'Phoned Wexel & Co. to buy to-morrow."

A grim smile crossed Old King Brady's face.

"This is the worst 'sure-thing' gang I ever met," said he. "They steal the private information speculators, brokers and bankers send to one another and plunge on it."

"That's the story in a nutshell," replied Harry.

"If this gang had enough money to put up on margins, they could become millionaires in a week. It's no wonder,

with such high stakes to be played for, that they are so desperate. See here, Nell!"

"What do you want?"

"Where is Cummings?"

"None of your business."

"Then where's the rest of the gang?"

"I won't tell you."

"We'll call on Wexel & Co. and wait for him. They must be the brokers who do the buying for your gang and Amos will be sure to go there."

He looked fixedly at the girl as he spoke.

She turned pale, her nostrils dilated as she breathed heavily, and she cast down her glance.

She dared not meet his eye.

Trying to assume a careless air, she exclaimed:

"You must be crazy!"

"No, no. Intensely sane, I assure you."

"You won't find Amos at Wexel's."

"Well, we'll try, anyhow."

"Don't be silly, Brady."

"Oh, you can't steer us off, my girl."

"Do it if you like. You won't gain anything by it."

"That remains to be seen."

Harry examined Hogan's injury.

The ball had cut a hole through the fleshy part of his left side, inflicting a painful but not serious wound.

"He was more scared than injured," said the boy.

"Got court plaster?" queried Old King Brady.

"Plenty."

"Then plaster him up, to stop the flow of blood, and we will take these two beauties to jail."

Harry obeyed the order.

When Hogan was repaired, they smashed the electrical appliance, led the prisoners out, and took them to the police station.

Here they were locked up.

"Only seven of the gang left now," said Harry.

"We may trip them to-morrow at the brokers'."

"Thunder!"

"What's up?"

"We've made a great mistake."

"How?"

"The negress, Dinah, knows about the arrest."

"Ah! And you fear——"

"She will notify the gang."

"We should have taken her, too."

"Of course."

"Go back and see if you can find her."

"Very well. Meet me in an hour."

"Where?"

"Corner of Wall street and Broadway."

"I'll be there."

"We must see Wexel & Co."

Harry hurried away.

After he was gone the old detective went down-town.

In half an hour after he arrived at the rendezvous Harry joined him, with a glum look on his face.

"You failed to find Dinah?"

"Exactly. The house was deserted."

"I hope she hasn't gone to notify Cummings."

"That's what she has done."

"He will be hard to find, then."

"We've got one consolation."

"And what's that?"

"The old coon doesn't know that we've discovered all about their stock brokerage business, and so can explain to him that we escaped alive, raided the house, nabbed Nell and Hogan and are floating around on a hunt for him again."

"Let's go down to see the broker."

By inquiring they located Wexel & Co., in No. 3 Wall street.

Going up in the elevator and seeing the brokers' names on a glass door, they passed into the office.

"Mr. Wexel in?" Harry asked the office boy.

"He is in his private office, sir."

"Engaged?"

"Don't know."

"Find out."

"Got your card?"

"Yes, and here it is."

The boy took the card into the rear office.

Finally he emerged and beckoned to the detectives.

"Mr. Wexel will see you," said the boy. "Go in."

They passed into the handsomely furnished private office and encountered a little, fat man, with a bald head and sparse side-whiskers.

"Mr. Wexel?" queried Harry, politely.

"That's me. You are detectives?"

"Yes."

"And your business with me is——"

"To find out something about one of your customers."

"What name?"

"Amos Cummings."

"Don't know any such person."

"What!"

"It's a fact."

"You are bluffing to shield him."

"No, I ain't. You'll see."

He opened the door and called in his clerks.

Then he turned to the detectives and said:

"Ask them."

Harry asked the clerks:

"Isn't there a customer of this house named Amos Cummings?"

"No, sir," replied the bookkeeper.

"Sure?"

"I could swear to it. I carry all our customers' names in my books and am therefore in a position to know."

"You'd ought to be. That's all. Clear out."

The clerks departed from the room.

"Believe me now?" queried the broker, triumphantly.

"Yes. You may know him by another name."

"How can we get at that?"

"To-morrow he may notify you to buy for him some of the following stocks, if his wife hasn't already telephoned

you to do so: Union Pacific, Steel, Paul, Sugar and T. C. L.——"

"Air Brake and Consolidated Gas, too?"

"Yes, and also International Paper and Baltimore and Ohio."

"I know who you mean now."

"What name does he go by here?"

"Richard Darrell."

The detectives gazed at each other in mute amazement.

They could not realize how the audacious villain had the presumption to go under that name.

Old King Brady was the first to recover his faculties.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XV.

A CONFERENCE WITH THE CHIEF.

"You seem to be amazed, Mr. Brady," said the broker.

"I am. Your customer is Amos Cummings, a crook. He has assumed the name of a man he practically murdered!"

It was now the broker's turn to look astonished.

"A crook!" he gasped. "A murderer?"

"That's what he is."

"Surely you are mistaken."

"Do you expect him here to-morrow?"

"Either he or his man."

"Why do you expect him?"

"His wife telephoned that he would be here."

"At what hour?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"To put up his margins?"

"Yes."

"We shall be here, too."

"For what purpose?"

"To arrest him."

"I hope you will."

"You'll lose your commission."

"I don't care! I don't wish to deal with crooks."

"You are a man of good principle, I see."

"I've got an old-established name to sustain. That is worth more to me than the business of a murderer."

"Moreover," said Old King Brady, "he's a wire-tapper."

"Good gracious! Is that the way he always seems to have information that nets him all gains and no losses?"

"It is. We are hunting him down."

"Well, I'll do all I can to aid you in capturing him."

"I'm sure we'd appreciate it."

"What can I do to help you?"

"It's my intention to set a trap for him."

"How?"

"My partner and I will hide in here."

"Well?"

"As soon as he comes in, we'll pounce on him."

"Good! But suppose he doesn't come?"

"You say he may send a man?"

"A person who has been here before."

"In that case we will shadow Cummings's agent."

"Very well, Mr. Brady."

"The agent will be pretty sure to go to Cummings's lurking-place, and we can follow at his heels."

"Certainly you can."

"As Cummings is hiding, that's the only way we can find him."

"It's a simple but good plan, sir."

"They are a dangerous gang, Mr. Wexel. Have they in the past bought much stock and many bonds through this firm?"

"Yes, indeed. And they always win. It was remarkable to us how he always seemed to have a foreknowledge that certain bonds and stocks were going to advance. Thus far he has cleared thousands of dollars through us."

"And he's penniless now."

"Impossible——"

"Anything is possible. Being an inveterate gambler, a few thousand dollars makes but little difference to Amos Cummings. In one night at a poker table he might win or lose a good-sized fortune."

"I can quite understand that."

The detectives mapped out a plan of action, and finally bade Mr. Wexel adieu and departed.

"We are pretty sure to catch someone in our trap to-morrow," Harry remarked, as they walked along, "and I hope it will be Cummings, for one very good reason."

"To what do you allude?" queried Old King Brady, as he took a block of plug tobacco from his pocket and bit off a piece. "The mystery of the suicide?"

"Yes. It's peculiar that the whole case seems to have suddenly dropped through. Can it be possible it is going to remain a mystery forever, like many other startling crimes? The newspapers contained the dead man's picture, yet no one recognized it, or notified the authorities that they did. The newspapers themselves do not mention the case any more, although for several days they gave it some space. The dead man is buried now, and we haven't learned anything at all about him. It's very exasperating to me."

"We can't learn anything about the matter until we can put the screws on Cummings and make him confess."

"So that's your conclusion?"

"I wonder if Hogan or Nell O'Brien would admit anything?"

"No. I have no hope in that direction."

"It struck me that Cummings is aware of our movements."

"I don't see how he can be."

"You've had the evidence that he is."

"When?"

"At the time Nell O'Brien fooled us so cleverly. The very fact that she represented herself to us as Dora Darrell shows me that our enemies knew we were looking for the Darrells. Now how did they find it out?"

"Ask me something easier."

"You admit I speak truly, don't you?"

"Of course you do."

"If Cummings didn't know it, why would he tell Nell to say that she was Dora Darrell, I'd like to know?"

"That remark gives her away."

"Badly, indeed. They must know that we are particularly anxious to find that girl and used their knowledge as a bait."

Old King Brady began to think hard.

After much effort he came to the conclusion that their enemies were either closely watching them or else that someone was tipping the crooks off about the detectives' plans.

Who could it be?

That was the question puzzling them.

The detectives went to headquarters and held a consultation with their Chief, to whom they explained all they had done.

It set him to thinking deeply.

Finally he said:

"You have thus far done as well with the matter as could be expected under the circumstances. But the trouble is, you have had no definite clues to follow."

"That's because we are pitted against a deep, cunning man, who knows how to keep his tracks covered," answered Old King Brady, in tones of disgust.

"But you'll have a chance to get him to-morrow."

"Yes. If we fail then I don't know where next to look."

"Well," said the Chief, "you've been very indiscreet in taking Cummings's broker into your confidence.

"How so?"

"He may be fooling you into the belief that he is on your side and then may notify Cummings that you are after him," answered the Chief.

Old King Brady smiled and shook his head.

"I don't think he will do that," said he.

"Why are you so confident?"

"Simply because I studied my man."

"And that convinced you of his sincerity?"

"It did."

"You run longer chances than I would."

The old detective shrugged his shoulders.

"I have my own way of carrying on my work," said he, "and I rarely make a failure of it."

"Very true. I'm puzzled about one thing now."

"What's that, Chief?"

"How Richard and Dora Darrell dropped out of sight so suddenly and completely that no trace of them can be found."

"If anyone knows where they are it's Cummings."

"What makes you think so?"

"It's my firm conviction that Cummings is either a very close friend or a very bitter enemy of the Darrells. The facts prove it. Cummings had some of Darrell's jewelry in pawn, he gave the suicide Dora Darrell's queer pistol with which to kill himself, and he telegraphed me that the Darrells were not in Saratoga."

"That shows his connection with the Darrells is close," admitted the Chief.

"Perhaps to-morrow's work may tell the tale."

"I'm sure I hope it will. If you fail in your design come

back to me and we will give Nell and Hogan the Third Degree and try to force them to squeal."

"Very well, Chief. But I don't believe anything would induce that couple to tell anything they may know about their leader."

CHAPTER XVI.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

On the following morning at ten o'clock a dapper young man strode briskly into the office of Wexel & Co.

Having asked to see the head of the concern he was ushered by the office boy into the private office.

"I am Ben Gold," announced he, drawing out a wallet. "You were ordered by my employer to buy certain stocks and bonds. Have you done so, Mr. Wexel?"

"Who is your employer?" asked the broker.

"Richard Darrell, sir."

"Oh, yes. Isn't he coming?"

"No. He had no time. I've not the money."

"Very well. I'll give you a receipt for it and deliver the paper. Everything is ready."

"Did you get everything he ordered?"

"Yes, and here they are."

The broker took a package from the safe.

Ben Gold gave him a check and received a receipt.

He then took the paper and left the office.

The Bradys were lurking outside and had been keenly watching Ben Gold, whom they both recognized as a forger they had once convicted.

"He must be Cummings's man," said Harry.

"There's the broker's signal—a handkerchief out the window—signifying that Gold is our quarry."

"Follow him."

"He's got a cab."

"We can easily get one, too."

The crook's vehicle carried him around into Broadway, and as there were several public hacks passing by at the time, the Bradys hailed one.

"Which way?" asked the driver.

"See that cab with red wheels?"

"Yes, sir."

"Follow it everywhere."

"At a distance, sir?"

"By all means. We are shadowing its passenger."

"I understand, sir."

And away rolled the hack in pursuit of the other, while the detectives peered through the glass front.

Up Broadway they went, to 14th street, and, turning over to the west side, it continued its course until it reached Eighth avenue, whereupon it turned down-town.

A little side street was taken.

In the middle of the block the cab paused.

The crook alighted and paid his driver. Going upon the stoop of a little frame house he rang the front doorbell.

A man admitted him.

The Bradys alighted and dismissed their cab.

Then, from a point where they were safe from the observation of anyone in the house, they viewed the building.

It was an old-fashioned place two stories high, with a peaked roof, a front piazza and small windows.

They were all closed tightly.

It gave the house an empty, deserted look.

In fact, rank weeds filled the little front yard and the paint was peeling from the building.

"Can that be Cummings's hiding-place?" asked Harry.

"It probably is."

"Why couldn't we raid it?"

"Get a platoon of police to aid us?"

"By all means. We could surround the little building and cut off their escape both back and front."

"I rather fancy that plan."

"Then I'll go and ring up the police for aid."

"Very well. I'll remain here on guard."

Harry hastened away.

No one left the house during his absence.

Old King Brady spoke to a grocer on the corner.

Pointing at the suspected house, he asked:

"Do you know who lives there?"

"Yah," replied the grocer. "Oldt Mrs. O'Prien."

"Nell O'Brien's mother?"

"Dot vos id."

"Anyone else?"

"Sure. She vos keeps poarders."

"Do you know any of them?"

"Nein; but I dink vun ohf dem vas crazy."

"Why so?"

"She vos hollerin' all de dime."

"Ah! It's a woman."

"Cerdainly."

"Have you seen her?"

"Nein."

"Who are the other boarders?"

"All men. I don't know dem."

"Do they go in and out all day and night?"

"Sure dey do, und dot vos vat surbrise me."

Harry returned after a while, with a smile on his face, and as they walked away from the store he said:

"We'll have a wagon load of cops here pretty soon."

"Where are we to meet them?"

"Around the corner."

"Good for you!"

They did not have to wait long before a police patrol wagon containing ten men dashed up and the detectives met it.

When the captain alighted and shook hands with the Bradys he asked, in tones of great curiosity:

"Where's the place?"

"A little frame house around the corner," Harry answered.

"You say it contains seven wire-tappers?"

"We believe so."

"How can we get at the rear?"

"Better cut your men into two platoons."

"Half for the front and half for the rear?"

"That's the plan. The men for the rear can go through the halls and back yards of those Ninth avenue tenements."

"Going to break in?"

"By all means."

"But you have no warrants."

"We have several for 'John Doe,' which answer our purpose."

"They will do to cover the law."

"Divide your men."

The captain gave his men instructions.

Half of them thereupon hurried around into Ninth avenue, and the rest went with the Bradys and the captain.

Reaching the front of the house they rang for admittance and a little, old Irish woman with gray hair came to the door.

She had on a lace cap and a pair of spectacles.

Observing who her callers were a startled look flashed across her wrinkled face, and she recoiled.

She was just about to slam the door in their faces when Harry thrust his foot in and held it.

"What do yez want here?" snapped the old dame.

"Are you Mrs. O'Brien?" asked Harry.

"Sure an' I am."

"Nelly's mother?"

"Av coorse."

"Are Cummings and his men here?"

"Begorry, I don't know thim."

"You mean you do know them?"

"Sure an' it's narthin av the koind."

"Well, old lady, we are coming in to search for them. You had better step aside. We don't wish to have any trouble with you, for we respect your gray hair, and——"

"Kape out av here!" yelled the old woman, fiercely.

"No, no! And we have no time to waste arguing with you, either. Come on, officers."

She was pulled aside.

In they rushed, and they heard the scramble of flying footsteps, the banging of windows, and Harry cried:

"They're escaping."

"Go for them!" roared the captain.

The noise was at the rear of the house.

As they dashed into the little dining-room they saw several men leaping out the windows into the yard.

Rushing to the windows, the Bradys leveled their pistols at the fugitives, whom they recognized at a glance as some of Cummings's gang, and Harry shouted at them:

"Halt, or we will fire!"

The five men paused.

At the same moment the policemen who had gone around into Ninth avenue came over the rear fence.

The crooks were caught between two fires, and a feeling of intense despair took possession of them when they observed the difficulty.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

Every one of the crooks were armed and desperate, for they knew that long terms in prison now confronted them.

"Don't surrender!" one of them gasped.

The rest were inspired with courage.

They made a sudden rush for the policemen who had come over the fence, and several pistol shots rang out.

In a moment the policemen shot back.

The captain and his men leaped into the yard and all the officers closed in on the wire-tappers.

A furious struggle ensued.

Overcome by sheer force of numbers the entrapped crooks finally were compelled to surrender.

One of the policemen had been holding Mrs. O'Brien, and the Bradys made a dash through the house.

"Cummings and one of the gang are missing," said Harry.

"They may be in one of the other rooms," Old King Brady answered. "You go down in the cellar and I'll go up-stairs. Don't hesitate to use your gun."

They separated.

While the officers were making prisoners of the crooks in the yard, Old King Brady went up-stairs.

The doors of several bedrooms stood open.

In he rushed, hastily searching the rooms.

The missing men were not there.

One of the doors was locked.

He thought Cummings might be in the room and, hurling himself against the panels, he smashed the door open and plunged inside.

A shriek assailed his ears.

It was the voice of a female.

He glanced around in amazement.

In a moment his glance had become accustomed to the gloom of the room, and he saw it was a sleeping apartment.

Near the bureau a beautiful young girl was crouching back, glaring at him in undisguised terror.

Old King Brady stared at her in amazement.

"Hello!" said he. "Are you one of the gang, too?"

"Sir! What do you mean?" the girl demanded, tremulously.

"Ain't you one of Cummings's gang?"

"I am not."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I am held here against my will."

"A prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Whose prisoner?"

"Amos Cummings's, of course."

"The deuce!"

"I thought you were one of his friends."

"You erred. I am his bitterest foe."

"Indeed! And who are you?"

"A Secret Service detective."

"Thank heaven! Then I can escape from here?"

"Of course you can if you are a prisoner."

"How did you chance to come here?"

"We are raiding this house to capture Cummings and his gang of wire-tappers."

"How fortunate for me!"

"It is. But, say, why are you held a prisoner?"

"Amos wanted to keep me out of his way. He designed to make a lot of money out of my disappearance. That man is a villain and I'm going to have him arrested."

"How long have you been confined here?"

"I don't know exactly, but I think it's fully six weeks."

"Good gracious! And did the old woman take care of you?"

"Yes. Cummings paid her well to do it. She's a wicked old creature, too, and the mother of a confidence woman."

"We know all about her and Cummings."

"Then you know into what dreadful hands I have fallen."

"May I ask your name?"

"It is Dora Darrell."

"What!" roared Old King Brady, in amazement.

"You look surprised."

"I have cause to be amazed."

"About me?"

"Yes."

"For what?"

"I've been hunting all over for you and your uncle Richard. Someone told me you had gone to Saratoga."

"Well, I never reached there. On the day I started to go to the depot my cousin, Amos Cummings, was in the cab——"

"Your cousin, eh?"

"He is my cousin."

"Well, go on."

"Suddenly Cummings seized me by the throat and chloroformed me. He then took me here and I was kept a prisoner."

"Why did he attack you?"

"For money. He declared that he was going to keep me out of the way, so I could not inherit my Uncle Richard's fortune, to which I was heiress."

"I see. He wanted to inherit it?"

"Exactly. As Uncle Richard had no relatives but Amos and me he would naturally get the money in case I were dead," said the girl. "It was a base trick to play on me."

"Very. And how about your uncle?"

"I fear he is dead."

"Why do you?"

"Because Amos told me he committed suicide with a queer little revolver I once bought of a Fourth avenue curio dealer."

Old King Brady was startled.

Like a flash the truth dawned on his mind.

"The prisoner in the old Van Velt manor must have been Mr. Darrell," he thought. "After imprisoning this girl, Cummings must have abducted his uncle and driven him to

suicide, so he could get the old man's fortune. I'll test this theory in a moment."

He drew a newspaper clipping from his pocket.

It was the account of the man found in the river, together with a photograph of the unfortunate.

Showing the picture to the girl, Old King Brady asked her:

"Is that your uncle's picture?"

"It is, but his beard is cut off."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Then read the appended article and learn his fate."

The girl complied.

When she finished there were tears in her eyes.

"It's a fact that he is dead," she said, sadly.

"Yes. Cummings forced him to commit suicide. The paper I saw him trying to make the man sign was doubtless a new will, leaving everything to Cummings."

"Just my opinion, sir."

"Now I can understand why Cummings had Mr. Darrell's jewelry and your little revolver. Moreover, it is quite evident how he happened to know so much about you."

"Can't you punish him for his villainy?"

"We intend to. For the present we have baffled his scheme to swindle you out of your inheritance."

"He can't get Uncle Richard's money while I'm alive, for I'm my uncle's adopted daughter, and Amos was totally disinherited because he had such a bad character."

"I see. You'd better call on the surrogate."

"So I shall."

"Reclaim your uncle's remains from Potter's Field."

"I will."

"And see your uncle's lawyer."

"You can depend upon that."

"Was Cummings in here to-day?"

"Yes, with one of his men. A few moments before you came in I heard him cry 'Cops. Come over the roof!' Then he and his companion rushed up in the attic."

Just then Harry joined them.

Old King Brady explained all he had learned.

The boy was amazed.

He then went up to the roof and found the scuttle open.

Harry saw that the two villains must have made their way to the roof of the adjoining building and thence got down to the street.

At any rate, they were gone.

He thereupon went back to Old King Brady and the girl, and they had a talk with the police captain.

After that the detectives departed with the girl, in order to see that she got safely home.

The Bradys remained with Dora Darrell until she conferred with her uncle's lawyer, saw the surrogate and went to the Morgue.

Here she identified the dead man's clothes and photograph, and ordered the body exhumed and sent to the family plot.

Amos Cummings and the man Ben Gold were still at large, and had with them the stocks and bonds they bought of Wexel & Co., and Dora had identified the jewelry Moses Levy had in his pawn shop as some that belonged to Richard Darrell.

The inference was that Darrell had been abducted and imprisoned, as the girl was, and that Cummings had then robbed him of his jewelry and pawned it.

When the girl's affairs were properly settled the detectives proceeded to her house with her.

"Won't you find a way for me to get in?" she asked, as she reached the dwelling. "My key to the basement door is lost and I can't enter without it."

Old King Brady glanced down in the area.

"Why," he exclaimed, "the basement door is open!"

"Open?" she gasped.

"Had anyone the privilege of entering?"

"Not a soul."

"Perhaps thieves are at work here."

"Oh, mercy! I'm afraid to go in, then."

"You needn't, until we enter first and see if the house is safe," said Harry. "Wait here."

They passed into the hall and drew their pistols.

"Keep your lantern handy. It's dark in here," said Old King Brady.

The boy ignited the lantern. They then crept into the hall and passed through the billiard room and kitchen.

No one was found.

On the parlor floor there was the same result.

But when they reached the bedrooms they heard a loud, splitting crash, and peered through an open door.

Two men were in the room.

They were breaking open a desk.

"It's Cummings and Gold!" whispered Harry.

"I'll cover them and you flash your light in."

"Go ahead; I'm ready!"

Flinging open the door, Old King Brady dashed into the room and leveled his pistol at the crooks.

Hearing the detectives coming the guilty pair glanced swiftly around, and the dazzling light of Harry's lantern flashed into their eyes.

But they saw the Bradys.

With cries of dismay they recoiled.

"Caught!" gasped Cummings, in tones of horror.

"Up with your hands!" thundered Old King Brady.

"I won't surrender!" hissed the villain.

"Then take the consequence!"

Cummings was pulling out his pistol when the old detective discharged his revolver.

The bullet struck the villain in the right shoulder and his hand fell, stunned, at his side.

"Oh!" he groaned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

The policemen and the five prisoners were driven away in the patrol wagon, leaving old Mrs. O'Brien in her cottage.

"Will you give in, or must I kill you?"

"I'll quit!" gasped Cummings.

"And I, too," yelled Gold, raising his hands.

"Harry, link them together with the bracelets."

The boy complied, and asked Cummings:

"What were you breaking into this desk for?"

"As the jig is up I may as well confess: I was after some private papers which are in the desk."

"You mean Mr. Darrell's will in favor of Dora, don't you? And you wanted to destroy it, didn't you?"

The startled, guilty look he gave them convinced the officers that Harry had divined the truth.

They took the men out and Dora went in.

The villains were locked up.

And that was the last of the wire-tapping gang.

When they were put on trial the gang were sentenced to long terms and were sent away to prison.

Cummings broke down in court when confronted with the evidence of his criminality and admitted that he had

schemed to put Dora and his uncle out of the way to secure the big fortune of Mr. Darrell.

With no chance to convict him of murder, the detectives saw that he went to Sing Sing for twenty years, for the despicable and criminal part he played.

It is safe to say that the Western Union, the bankers and the brokers were glad enough to learn that the gang had been disposed of.

The astute Bradys were well rewarded and highly praised for their clever work.

Our readers shall hear of them again in another record of their work to follow this, so we shall only part with the brave fellows for a short time.

THE END.

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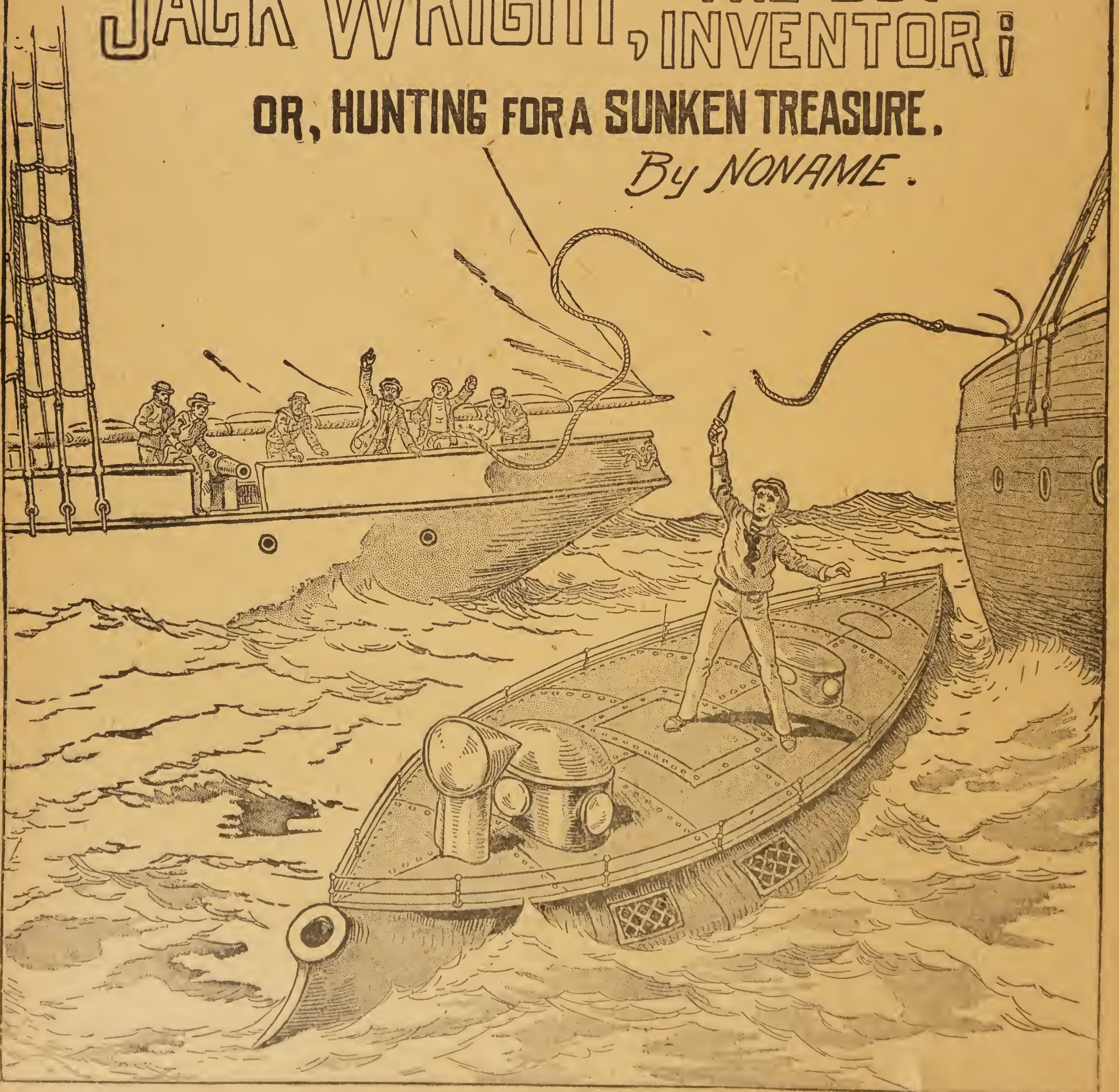
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